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To the Editors

Science to the rescue!

A Vatican City news leak alleges that church representatives are in touch with scientists who succeeded in cloning a sheep, with a view to ascertaining whether this procedure could be performed using the Holy Father and various members of the curia as subjects. The purpose would be to alleviate the priest shortage and fill upcoming vacancies in the College of Cardinals without having to ordain women and married people. Efforts to question a person who answered a call to the Vatican switchboard were met only by a taped rendition of "Hello, Dolly!"

CLARA WILL FAULHABER
New Braintree, Mass.

Fixing Social Security

Your editorial on Social Security ["How Dotty Can We Get?" February 14] clearly outlines the various proposals to assure the solvency of the system and reminds us of the social justice issues involved: the primacy of the human person, regard for the common good, the option for the poor and vulnerable. John Buell's article in the same issue ["It Ain't Broke: Social Security Really Works"] fills a real need for information; a recent poll showed that only 30 percent of the people believe that Social Security will be around when they retire, although more than 80 percent support the program. Your thoughtful presentation of the hidden agendas lurking behind the "crisis mentality" that is being fostered in much of the popular literature was very useful.

On the other hand, your statement that "there are good reasons not to worry about the impact on the economy of a small tax increase" to preserve the program fails to note that such a payroll tax increase would fall hardest on low-wage workers. That would be true as well of across-the-board cuts in benefits and an increase in the age level at which workers become eligible for benefits.

Better solutions: Increase the wage base for FICA taxes (currently, it is levied on only the first $64,500 of a worker's pay) and enact a moderate increase of taxes on benefits paid to upper-income retirees.

JOAN A. KOLISS, O.S.F.
Alexandria, Va.

The writer serves in the social policy department of Catholic Charities, U.S.A.

Alleva & the Troubles

What I have liked about Richard Alleva's movie reviews is his seeming ability to keep moral judgments separate from his esthetic judgments (*see* the "Last Word" by Walter Kerr, November 8, 1996).

But when it comes to reviewing movies about Irish political violence ("Some Mother's Son," "In the Name of the Father," and "Michael Collins"), he loses it. What's his problem?

ELIZABETH MCMENAMIN
Scranton, Pa.

Islam & freedom

Your two articles on Islam [January 31] fail to address some profound problems with the dialogue between Islam and Christianity, and between Islam and other religions.

For example, John Esposito rightly points out areas where Catholicism has had to evolve (religious freedom, separation of church and state, etc.). He then argues that today there are similar areas of change in the Islamic world. I hope so, but I see no evidence of such progress.

The real problem is doctrinal. In Christianity, the separation of the two powers was always a theoretical possibility even if it was not always practiced in fact (*see* the letter of Pope Gelasius, "Two There Are," A.D. 496). No such separation has ever existed in Islam, even in theory. Evolution for Muslims in this area has no doctrinal foundation, and therein lies the real problem. True, Christians and Jews ("people of the Book") were/are tolerated in Islamic societies, but other religions are not; how else explain the bloody confrontations betweeen Muslims and Hindus in India? For a good Muslim, the worship of statues and cows is extremely revolting.

In fact, Islamic tolerance for Christians and Jews is not true religious freedom; they are given only the right to practice in private. Even now, in almost every Islamic society, no freedom to encourage conversions is ever allowed; apart from Iraq, not one Islamic society grants real freedom to all religions. The violence directed against non-Muslims in places like Algeria, Sudan, and Iran may not be true to Islam, but it is Islamic as part of a doctrinal absolutism that allows tolerance (but only that) to people of the Book, and even that is denied to Christians in places like Sudan.

Muslims are ordinarily given every religious freedom in the West. A sort of exception occurred when the Saudis wanted to build a second mosque in Geneva. The Swiss government said it would give permission when the Saudis allowed a church to be built in Riyadh. The Saudi application was withdrawn in a matter of hours. When the pope sent a representative to the dedication of the mosque in Rome, there was no answer to the pope's request for religious freedom in Islamic societies.

Thus, no matter how beautful we find Islamic mysticism, religious practices, and understanding of prayer, the treatment of non-Muslims in the Islamic world gives reason for Western distrust of Islam. Even at this moment, Christians are undergoing enslavement and slaughter in Algeria, Sudan, Iran. Any dialogue must face this harsh reality and not glide past it

(Continued on page 4)

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COMMONWEAL

April 11, 1997 / Volume CXXIV, Number 7

UP FRONT

Correspondence *Critical minds at work on many targets* 2

Editorial *Jerusalem* 5

Notebook *The NCR accuses*
Margaret O'Brien Steinfels 6

COLUMNISTS

The tyranny of time
Sidney Callahan
Some of us have so little time we can't even think about it. 7

Taming the big bucks
David R. Carlin, Jr.
Only a democratically reinvigorated electorate can offset the influence of money. 9

SHORT TAKES

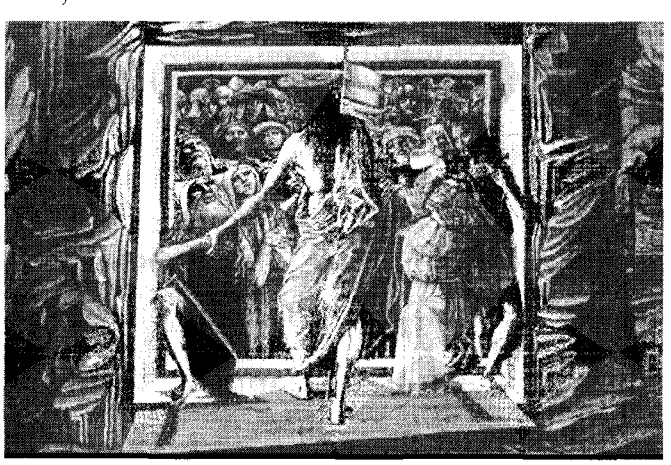
Character counts
David McCabe
We should have known that Bill Clinton is flawed. 10

Crisis in Ecuador
Kenneth P. Jameson 11

ARTICLES

PROTECTING THE GUILTY
Stephen J. Pope
John Salvi III, a killer, still deserved better than he got. 13

THE DESCENT INTO HELL
Jerry Ryan
Eastern and Western views of the time between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. 17



ARTISTS

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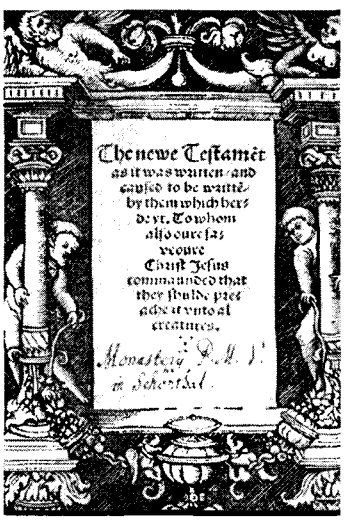

A Bible for the plowboy
Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill
An exhibit at the New York Public Library reminds us that getting a vernacular Bible into the hands of Christians was of paramount importance to reformers. Often it cost them their heads. 19

BOOKS

Bad Land
by Jonathan Raban
Rand Richards Cooper
The "land of big sky" finds its Conrad. 21

Liberating Conscience
by Anne E. Patrick
James F. Keenan 22

USA *by John Dos Passos*
Edward T. Wheeler 24

Religion booknotes
Lawrence S. Cunningham
Books on John LaFarge, Ita Ford, Jacques Gaillot, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Cranmer. 26

POETRY

Prayer Grows a Body
Deirdre Cornell 15

Anniversary
Daniel R. Barnes 16

THE LAST WORD

Taxation without salvation
Peter Feuerherd 31

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(Continued from page 2)
by reference to past injustices on both sides.

PETER J. RIGA
Houston, Tex.

A boost for Beijing

Re: Mary Ann Glendon's article on "Feminism and the Family" [February 28]:

As both a feminist and a grandmother, I am very concerned about what we as a society have done to our young mothers (and fathers!) by refusing to consider family life at least as important as workplace duties (including the current welfare "reforms," which have a chance of working only if they cost us more money through job creation, training, etc., than they save us in welfare benefits). It is appalling that we are unable to imagine ways of molding our society so that we lead more balanced lives. So I applaud Mary Ann Glendon's article, which was right on in many ways.

But, as a participant in the September 1995 NGO Forum in Beijing, China, I am compelled to offer my different view of that event. The most impressive aspect of the forum was that these 39,000 women from all over the world were *all* doing *something concrete* to try to improve life in their home towns and countries. They were in Beijing to share their visions and techniques with one another. Though probably 25 percent were from the United States (more of us could afford to go), it was definitely not white America that was predominant at the conference. We Americans came in every color and ethnicity and spoke many languages. And the energy for much of the conference came from third-world women, whom we met not only as equals, but as teachers.

Certainly there were more women there who were over rather than under forty. Few young mothers are willing or able to add community activism to their already too-full platter, overflowing with at least three full-time jobs (home and husband, children, outside employment). But there *were* women in attendance who were in their twenties and thirties, even teens, and they made sure their ideas were heard and taken seriously.

Over a year-and-a-half later, I am still corresponding regularly with two women in their late twenties whom I met at the conference. Both are married; one is an engineer from Inner Mongolia (to whom I gave my Native-American-made earrings on the conference's last day); the other is a journalist from Ghana (who got my Beijing-purchased rain slicker). Our letters are long and intimate, concerning everything from family life and relationships to how democracies work in the United States and in their countries. And I have heard at least once from a Tibetan teacher, an Islamic student from Turkey, and a villager from Nigeria (all under thirty-five), and from the head of Chicago's Department of Aging, who is a staunch Republican in her late seventies.

True, conditions at the NGO Forum were such that many U.S. women found them a cross between Girl Scout camp and Outward Bound, but many third-world women found them wonderful. Of course, even while we were there, and certainly when we returned to our "real lives," we feared that what we witnessed was a bare beginning, and we have to struggle daily against giving up the struggle for a better world.

But whenever I find myself losing hope, all I need do is look at my list of names and addresses of real women from all over the world whom I met in Beijing, women who care passionately about a cause (and sometimes, but not often, even opposing causes) to realize that I am not alone. Since September 1995, the earth seems smaller, and my personal world far larger.

JEANNE PIEPER
Los Angeles, Calif.

Needed: some gratitude

I found Mary Ann Glendon's article troubling for many reasons, but I will focus on only one. Ms. Glendon writes that she and her generation ("baby boomers"?) found Susan B. Anthony and the suffragettes "quaint, and a bit strange." Her women students, we are told, feel much the same about Bella Abzug and Betty Friedan. They are said only to "*seem*" grateful (my italics) to the women's movement for "the opportunities they now enjoy."

Let me suggest a parallel in the Civil Rights movement. Do Abraham Lincoln, Thurgood Marshall, and Martin Luther King, Jr., seem "quaint, and a bit strange," or is it just women who age so quickly? Most African-Americans appear grateful for the struggles of their predecessors. Why is it that so many successful women think they alone are responsible for their achievements? Ms. Glendon and her smug women students need to be reminded that forty years ago few if any of them would have been at Harvard Law School (except as secretaries).

Yes, women, African-Americans, Jews, and (need I remind anyone?) Catholics have come a long way in the past few decades. That doesn't give any of us the right to feel superior to the people who made it all possible, or to take for granted what they achieved and what may so easily be lost.

ANN STRAULMAN
Kansas City, Mo.

The author replies:

Like Jeanne Pieper, I am still corresponding with many extraordinary women whom I met at Beijing. It does not surprise me at all that she found the NGO (nongovernmental organizations) forum personally rewarding. How much more enriching that unofficial conference would have been, however, had it not been dominated by well-financed special-interest groups from the United

(Continued on page 29)

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Jerusalem

The Israeli government's decision in February to allow construction of a substantial new Jewish suburb in Arab East Jerusalem, and the violent Palestinian reaction, have brought the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to a standstill and virtually drained the reservoir of trust built up so painstakingly since the beginning of the Oslo peace process.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision was not new Israeli policy. The land had been appropriated for some years, and the Israeli Supreme Court gave its go-ahead for construction in 1995. But Palestinians in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem—both areas came under Israeli control in the 1967 war—continue to point to the UN Security Council Resolution 478 of 1980 and the Geneva Convention of 1949 as the legal basis for overriding the Israeli decision. As the convention states in part, victors are forbidden to alter the demographic composition of conquered territories, either by forced migration or the displacement of resident populations.

Despite those legal guidelines, Israel has continued to create preemptive "facts on the ground." Both Israeli and Palestinian human-rights groups concur that since 1967 more than a third of East Jerusalem has been annexed by Israel, and that more that 39,000 housing units have been built for Jews compared to 600 for Palestinians. The plan of successive Israeli governments has been to expand Jerusalem's pre-1967 borders (today they reach almost as far south as Bethlehem) in order to create a new "Greater Jerusalem." Within this enlarged municipality, housing developments will concentrically ring the ancient center city, squeezing and sequestering the remaining Palestinian settlements into so many poor and isolated Bantustans.

To the eye of even the casual visitor, the success of this plan is palpable. But so too are the contrasts and disparities it has produced for the city's Palestinian residents. In 1992, the city of Jerusalem paid out $900 per capita in expenditures in the Jewish sectors of the city, but only $150 in the Palestinian areas. Anat Hoffman, a city councilwoman for Jerusalem from the leftist Meretz party, recently reported that for every Palestinian dollar the city takes in, it returns only ten to fifteen cents. Today, Palestinians are permitted to live and build in only 10 percent of East Jerusalem, against the Israelis' 34 percent (the rest is set aside for "green areas" where construction is precluded). Furthermore, bureaucratic zoning and construction delays for Palestinian development in East Jerusalem have been designed to encourage Palestinian emigration from the city (*see*, *New York Times*, March 13).

But if Israeli policy had been in place for so long, why was there such a violent reaction to the announcement of construction at Har Homa? Because the new neighborhood is meant to drive a stake into the heart of the Palestinians' dream of a capital in East Jerusalem. The development, joined to other new Jewish neighborhoods such as Gilo, would preclude the Palestinians from piecing together a viable, contiguous entity in East Jerusalem. Thus, Netanyahu's declaration, "I am building Har Homa, and nothing is going to stop me," seemed to them a unilateral move to finalize the "status of Jerusalem." His later declaration that a "final settlement" should be wrapped up in six months seemed reckless in light of the current break-

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down in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Yet proposals exist that can help Israelis and Palestinians think about how to govern and manage a united Jerusalem. Gershon Baskin's *Jerusalem of Peace* (Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, 1994) makes a strong argument for *rapprochement* and proposes a new city charter that would guarantee Jerusalem as "the eternal capital of the state of Israel and at the same time [allow it to] be the capital of the new Palestinian state." Such a charter would provide for either a united municipal government or for two separate municipal councils, each responsible for its own sections. The city would be demilitarized, and a police force of Palestinians and Israelis would handle responsibilities for their appointed sections. A new Jerusalem Court of Justice would be established, composed of an equal number of Israeli and Palestinian justices. It would arbitrate cases on a supranational level, that is, one transcending the regulations of either Israel or a Palestinian state.

If these proposals sound wildly utopian, note that similar ones were made recently by two Knesset members from opposing parties, Michael Eitan of Likud and Yossi Beilin of Labor (*see*, *The Tablet*, February 8). They propose that Jerusalem remain a single unified city and the capital of Israel, but that the municipality be divided into two subsections. Beilin further suggests that the Arab suburbs might serve one day as the capital of a new Palestinian state.

In the late 1980s, Israeli revulsion at the disproportionate use of military force against Palestinians during the *intifada* led to a transformation of Israeli attitudes that eventually changed government policy and gave birth to the peace process. Despite last year's election of the hawkish Netanyahu, 75 percent of Israelis continue to support that process. While events of the past month will have shaken some of that support—Israelis have every reason to deplore Yassir Arafat's release of well-known Hamas militants—it is precisely in the present explosive situation that peace must be pursued most urgently.

Some resolution of these conundra is the necessary cornerstone for peace in the Middle East. For despite Jerusalem's mystical and nearly mythical hold on residents, exiles, captors, and pilgrims, settlement of the city's mundane historical conflicts will determine whether its people realize the holy city's promise. And absent such an achievement, the battle for Jerusalem may not be resolved this side of Armageddon. □

NOTEBOOK

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

THE 'NCR' ACCUSES

Our editor responds

I guess I wasn't looking, but at some moment during my two decades of editing four high-brow, low-circulation journals, I became a "media representative." I learned this by way of an editorial in the *National Catholic Reporter* (March 14, 1997) titled "Catholic Common Ground Shuts out Press." The editorial chastises the organizers of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative for barring the media from its first conference, held March 7-9 in Chicago.The *NCR* editorial also complains that, despite this ban, at least some "media representatives" would be participating in the session. I was singled out. So was my good friend Peter Steinfels.

Taking advantage of my new-found status as a media representative, let me suggest why the Initiative's decision to close its working session to the press was, if not incontestable, at least reasonable. Let me also suggest that the *NCR*'s editorial is a good example of the "mood of suspicion and acrimony" that was a major impetus for the Common Ground Initiative in the first place.

The editorial, while not reaching the rhetorical levels of some *NCR* anathemas, made some harsh judgments, especially that the Initiative's "first order of business is to exclude."

The editorial is also flatly wrong in calling the March meeting "secret." Secret meetings are ones that outsiders know nothing about and that insiders are pledged not to reveal. In this case, the conference's place, date, list of participants, and opening papers were given to the media. Its opening session and a post-conference press conference and teleconference with call-ins were opportunities for news coverage. Furthermore, participants were free to report on the substance of the discussions, but with the understanding that they would not quote or attribute specific remarks to individual participants. "Secret," in other words, is not the same as "closed to the media" or "not for attribution." Experienced journalists know that the latter two categories are not rare or suspect deviations but conditions that govern all sorts of events. Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise. I don't know, for example, whether the editorial discussions of the *National Catholic Reporter* are open to reporters from *The Wanderer*, but I rather doubt it. Certainly *Commonweal*'s are not.

At last November's Call to Action conference in Detroit, the aforementioned Peter Steinfels was ushered out of two workshops because the participants believed that a media presence would be inhibiting and destroy the "safe" atmosphere. They had a point, especially after he was followed into one workshop by two men lugging TV cameras. Perhaps the *NCR*'s sensitivity has been sharpened by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops shifting important business into executive session. That trend is disturbing; but almost no one would deny the legitimacy of the bishops holding executive sessions.

It seems commonsensical to me, but obviously not to everyone, that both kinds of gatherings—private meetings where participants can speak frankly and spontaneously and public ones where they can be held accountable—are needed in the church as in all institutions. Exactly what should

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be the mix of confidentiality and openness depends on circumstances—and it depends on whether a group has official powers, like the bishops, or does not, like the Common Ground Initiative or the *NCR* itself.

The diversity of the forty participants at the March conference, although not as complete as the organizers had hoped, was impressive enough to rebut any suspicion that the Initiative set out to exclude. The group made its way through a rigorous agenda at eight working sessions. It exchanged insights and opinions at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. People felt free to speak their minds, or to reserve judgment. They could try out ideas they might later retract or modify. Their words would not appear in print or on the evening news. Would it have been better if a project striving to clarify disagreements among American Catholics had begun its work by opening this first conference to the media? An argument to that effect could have been made. But the *NCR* editorial never made it.

Let's get specific. Opening the conference to the *NCR* would have meant opening it to *The Wanderer*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times*, the *Weekly Standard*, the *New Republic*, and maybe to CNN and Mother Angelica. Does anyone doubt that the atmosphere of the meeting would have changed? Not a few of the participants have been viciously attacked by *The Wanderer* in the past; would they have felt confident that their words would not be torn out of context?

And frankly how many participants would have felt apprehensive about the prospect of the *NCR*'s own coverage? The *NCR* began in 1964 with a commitment to professional and impartial reporting—it has recently shown a tendency to return to that standard. But surely its editors know that it is widely perceived as practicing "advocacy journalism" with different standards of scrutiny for its good guys and its bad guys, and with a weakness for reducing serious theological issues to flippant formulas.

As I said, a case can be made that the dynamics of media presence might not have undermined the objectives of the Common Ground conference. But that case ought at least to address the realities that the organizers faced. As the Common Ground statement, "Called to Be Catholic," suggested in its working principles for a renewed spirit of dialogue, the *NCR* might have attempted to appreciate "the valid insights and legitimate worries" that motivated a decision to limit media coverage.

At this point, I hear a voice saying "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." Indeed, the *NCR*'s editorial concluded by approximating Harry Truman's gruff criterion for political combat: "If some of the participants are worried that a discussion over divisions could become a bit too scrappy for their tastes," the *NCR* writes, "then maybe the organizers need to find some replacements."

Scrappy, it seems, is what the *NCR* understands. Indeed, it has done a service by covering some divisions in the church as political combat. But what if the "scrappy" mode has reached its limits? What if it is precisely an alternative mode, of dialogue, that the Common Ground Initiative is seeking? Can the *NCR* adjust? Or must the Initiative?

Of course, the *NCR* approves of "dialogue." Almost everyone does, except, perhaps, a few cardinals. But then the editorial sneers at "an elite undertaking of a few academics and church types for the pleasure and enlightenment of themselves and their invited guests." What it wants, instead, is a "broad and robust conversation that engages a big church that finds itself increasingly battling over important issues." Fine. But how is this "robust conversation" in a "battling" church different from what is already going on, to so little avail? How does it differ from the disputations, denunciations, maneuverings, and mobilizations that have created the current atmosphere?

How many who hailed the Common Ground Initiative really see it as a new arena for the same style of wrangling, with the same hermeneutic of suspicion and the same arsenal of adversarial techniques? The *NCR* could do an extraordinary service not by abandoning its concern for media access but by offering a tone, language, and conscientiousness in both its reporting and its opinion columns that indicate it really wants something different. I say that as one media representative to another. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

THE TYRANNY OF TIME

Let's cast it off

Now is the time for all good men (and women) to throw off the tyranny of time—if we can manage it. I know too many enslaved people. They (we) live time-starved lives, daily fighting their way through ever more crowded schedules. Deadline follows deadline, demand piles upon demand. No time for this, no time for that. Like Puritan ascetics of old, these harassed persons constantly lash themselves if they waste a precious hour. They pay for leisure with anxious bouts of self-reproach and nonmoral pangs of guilt.

These are highly socialized and moral folks for the most part, so they are not striving for wealth, power, or vapid celebrity status. Nor do they suffer from gluttony, lust, despair, envy, or anger. (Well, maybe a touch of envy for those who work more efficiently and get more good deeds done.) Temptation comes for certain Americans who love their work in the guise of invitations to outings "just for fun." Oh, how sinful to sit in the sun accomplishing nothing. Self-

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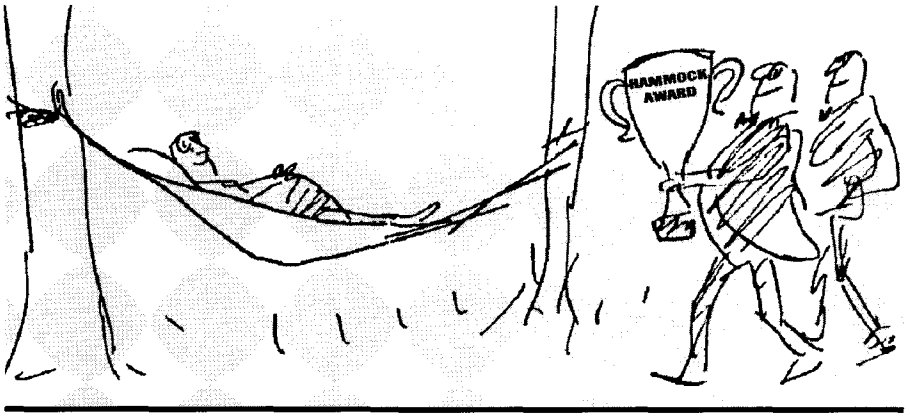

driven types can often "take five," or engage in a pause that refreshes, but then it's back to the grindstone, or laptop. Time, relentless time, waits for no man.

Yes Emily, I hear you. "Because I could not stop for Death. He kindly stopped for me—" and so on. But we're not talking death here—at least not yet. The problem is how to make the best use of every single moment before our hour has come. And if we are Christians it can be worse, because part of the Last Judgment is being called to account for how we spend our lives. So much good work to be done; so many loved ones to nurture; so many needs to be met. This isn't a case of some '60s siren singing, "So many men, so little time." Nobody in this particular crowd is laying waste their powers. It's more of a conflict of good with good.

So how, short of dying or contracting chronic fatigue syndrome, can the time-obsessed be liberated? One hopeful strategy is to reappraise the reigning Western theory of time that dominates our everyday thinking. In our Newtonian picture of the universe time is linear, abstract, absolute—a continuous number-line or container of events out there somewhere beyond events. Time relentlessly ticks away, no matter what. In the more sophisticated picture of the arrow of time given by Stephen Hawking, we still see a relentless, one-way progression of the universe from a big bang toward some goal, maybe even a final collapse upon itself. Odd anomalies like black holes may mess up the picture, but in the generally accepted scientific vision of the universe we still must cope with a one-way directional flow of time that is largely indifferent to human needs.

Are there no appealing alternatives? Ancient theories of the world and time as illusory or caught in endless repetitive and futile cycles aren't much help. A more inviting prospect lies in anthropological accounts of the Trobriand Islanders for whom time was like a "puddle in which one sat, splashed, or wallowed," that is, discontinuous and organized in qualitative wholes. But I can't really give up a Newtonian paradigm of time on the testimony of a South Sea culture. Isn't there some way to keep the scientific evidence for time's arrow progressing in one direction toward a goal and yet get a little breathing room?

Yes, according to a wonderful book by theoretical psychologist Brent D. Slife, *Time and Psychological Explanation* (SUNY Press, 1993). Slife offers alternative scientific and philosophical theories of time and causation. (And he doesn't even resort to Saint Augustine's erudite struggles to understand time.) The overall point Slife makes is that new types of systems-thinking cast doubt on Newton's abstract, deterministic time-line in the sky.

Slife asserts that we can keep the general forward progression of time inherent in science's big bang theory but recognize that other rhythms of nature and holistic change will be relative and not rigid or reductionistic. The logic of before and after always applies but different causes can produce instantaneous changes that are not quantitative but qualitative. Time occurs *through* the interrelationships of events, not outside of them. In the end, Slife thinks, we can rationally argue for the intriguing assertion that, in a universe containing many different natural processes and different kinds of causes, "time hops and skips and flits."

All right, now we can break out of the Newtonian straitjacket of relentless, oppressive theories of time ticking away beyond control. But can I make something morally and religiously of these liberating ideas? Well, certainly a renewed emphasis upon qualitative time-change can bring me back to the familiar spiritual truth that engaging in prayer places you in "the eternal present" of God. Or as Augustine says, One who is "ever present, never future, never past." But to engage in "the sacrament of the present moment" you have to take time to pray and worship. Is this the only way to break free from obsessions with time?

Lately I've also begun to glimpse another insight about time and life. Why, pray tell, do I think that my time is my own private possession? After all, my existence in time and my beloved stream of consciousness is a gift of a gracious God. Isn't the essence of love and obedience to recognize that my self-appropriated, possessively guarded time belongs to the Creator of Time? My basic job is to joyfully receive the time bestowed.

If I can just be receptive enough and let go, maybe I can let up. Surely if all is gift then it's a fine thing to bask in the sun and delight in the moon's beauty. Then onward to the opera, the ballet, the galleries, the lectures, and lingering with friends in cafés over coffee. A new life as an appreciative receiver of gifts opens before me.

Mmm. Either I'm about to make a leap into a new level of spiritual wisdom or I'm coming down with some subtle form of multiple personality disorder. I've always thought that if I had to have other identities I'd like one to be that of a lady who lunches. But at this point only one dissociated part of me could give up the struggle to get more things done.

How I resonate to Augustine's prayer after he has tried to understand time; he prays to the Lord who is "eternally at work and eternally at rest." Perhaps this is the Peace we long for. □

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DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

TAMING THE BIG BUCKS

Democratic activism is the only way

Given the attention the press is paying to the issue, I suppose it is inevitable that we'll have a campaign finance reform law before the next round of congressional elections. Or at least we'll have something *called* "campaign finance reform." Whether it will actually reform anything is another question. Frankly, I doubt it.

Certainly there is something unseemly about rewarding big contributors with nights in the so-called Lincoln bedroom. After all, Lincoln is a quasi-sacred personality, the great American sage, saint, and martyr. Using his name to raise political money carries the aroma of sacrilege, of simony.

Compounding the offense is the fact that the first Republican president is being exploited for Democratic ends. In fairness, if the Lincoln bedroom is to be "sold" to contributors, this commercial privilege should have been reserved for a GOP president.

But this particular problem is easy to deal with. My suggestion is that the Lincoln bedroom be renamed "the Franklin Pierce bedroom." Since Pierce was both a Democrat and a presidential nonentity, no one's sense of fairness or sacredness will be outraged if President Bill Clinton lets Barbra Streisand spend a night with the ghost of the fourteenth president.

A far more serious problem is the enormous importance of big money in elections for major office.

Running for high political office is a terribly expensive exercise. Candidates are forced to spend an appalling amount of time on their knees begging for money, and the people who contribute generally do so not out of a spirit of good citizenship but because they expect something in return.

Politicians would welcome a reform that would allow them to campaign more cheaply. They don't enjoy the degradation of begging or the great amount of time it takes. Contributors too would welcome this reform, since it would allow them to buy influence at cheaper rates. Only TV stations would object, since they get the biggest chunk of money spent on campaigns for major office.

But a reform of this type would do little to touch the deeper problem, namely that rich individuals and corporations have an enormously disproportionate influence on American elections. Why should someone with $10 million have a bigger voice—a *much* bigger voice—than average citizens? Is this compatible with the spirit of democracy? Isn't it, rather, an oligarchical element in our system?

Consequently, many of our campaign finance reformers propose to impose strict limits on how much can be given by contributors, how much can be spent by candidates, even on how much can be spent by candidates out of their own pockets. When it is objected that such limits won't pass muster with the Supreme Court, which is likely to view them as infringements of the free-speech clause of the First Amendment, the reformers have a ready answer: "Amend the Constitution."

According to this view, the big money scandal is so outrageous, the influence of wealth on politics so corrupting, that it is worth meddling with the First Amendment. (This is proposed, oddly enough, by some of the same people who nearly faint from shock when anyone suggests amending the First Amendment in order to permit prayer in schools.)

Well, let's suppose the Constitution gets amended and all sorts of restrictions are imposed on giving and taking and spending. What happens then? Will that reduce the influence of big-money people in Washington?

Of course not. Rich people don't get rich by being stupid, and politicians don't make it to Washington by being stupid either. Between them, these two clever sets of people will have little trouble figuring out how to let the former give and the latter take. Only someone unacquainted with rich people, politicians, and human nature could believe that these folks won't be able to get around any system of restrictions written into law—especially if they are the very people writing the restrictions.

Apart from a few interludes of violent revolutionary upheaval, when aristocrats have occasionally been known to swing from lampposts, does history give

"You're a special prosecutor? You don't look special."

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us any examples of regimes in which the rich have not had a political influence vastly disproportionate to their numbers? Not at all. Why then imagine that the United States, in the waning days of the twentieth century, can do what no body politic has ever done before?

A society's political system is a reflection of its social system. This is true as a general rule, but it is especially true in a society marked by economic and political liberty, where money and ideas move freely. If wealth is unevenly distributed in the United States, so will political influence be unevenly distributed. There is no help for that. Laws can alter the channels through which moneyed influence will flow, but they can't prevent the influence. If we close all the doors, influence will come in through the windows and chimneys.

So is this a counsel of despair I'm offering? Well, not quite.

Ours is supposed to be a system of checks and balances. It is futile to try to eliminate the inevitable—the operation of the oligarchic principle in American political life. But this principle can be balanced by the operation of a countervailing force, namely the democratic principle.

The problem with American politics today is not that big-money influence is too strong in some absolute sense. It's too strong only in a relative sense, which is to say that influences other than big money are too weak. We have allowed the democratic element in our politics to deteriorate. A sign of this is the decline in political party loyalty; another sign is the smaller and smaller numbers who vote in elections (less than 50 percent of all adult citizens in the presidential election of 1996).

If we want to tame our oligarchy, the only realistic way of doing so is by restoring our democracy. All the rest is talk. □

David McCabe

CHARACTER COUNTS

A Clinton voter reconsiders

Bill Clinton's ascension to the presidency proved just how deep was the yearning among millions of Americans for a candidate who appeared both genuinely committed to a vision of egalitarian democracy and politically shrewd enough to make that vision work. The appeal of this combination of ideals and pragmatism ultimately overwhelmed what was then called the character issue. Most people who voted for Clinton (myself included) were willing to accept both that he had dodged the Vietnam draft and had extramarital affairs. These were sides of the private man, we reasoned, with no bearing on his performance in public office.

The daily revelations about the Clinton administration's shameless pandering for campaign contributions, however, suggest we were wrong: Character matters. It matters because, though the president leads both a public and a private life, in the end it is just one person who leads both. Though liberals like me hate to admit it, the president's unethical (and possibly illegal) selling of influence may just be the logical culmination of aspects of his character displayed in both his handling of the draft and his personal life.

"I may be morally wrong, but I'm politically correct."

The most damning item to surface about Clinton's attempt to evade the draft is something that was never in dispute: his declaration in a letter that his chief aim throughout the draft process was to maintain his "political viability." This is a startling and ominous admission from a twenty-three-year-old facing a life-and-death question of conscience. It reveals a naked desire for political office that renders almost insignificant the grave issues on which such a decision should be based, and makes his principled opposition to the war seem an afterthought. Is it so surprising that such a man would countenance selling access to his office, in a manner deeply at odds with the democratic ideals he espouses, to increase his campaign coffers and ensure his reelection?

On the other question of character—the president's personal life—we must tread lightly, for here, appropriately, much remains unknown; politicians have privacy rights too. But once such matters become public (a state of affairs facilitated by the Clintons' dramatic 1992 "60 Minutes" interview), citizens have a right to ask what these matters reveal about the candidate. Voters will no doubt draw differing conclusions, but it's worth remembering that, for many of us, marriage is our deepest commitment, sex our greatest temptation. How we handle ourselves in these areas reveals much about such things as our capacity for self-control, our willingness to honor promises that stand in the way of what we want, and our ease in leading a life that may involve presenting two faces to the world. In short, it reveals much about our integrity and strength of character. For this reason those worried by what candidate Clinton acknowledged on national television may not have been greatly surprised that President Clinton, who I suspect remains genuinely committed to the ideals of egalitarian democracy, tolerated for reasons of personal advantage actions totally at odds with

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those ideals. There is no way to describe this other than as a failure of character.

I'm not suggesting that candidates for high office be judged by ideals of integrity and character different from those we endorse in our daily lives; we must all strive for these ideals, at all times. But with the presidency come awesome privilege and great responsibility, and voters have a right to ask themselves if a candidate embodies those ideals to a special degree. Those who believe Clinton is seriously deficient in this respect, but who still endorse many of the goals of his administration—such as a fairer health-care system, a more inclusive and tolerant military, and the revitalization of depressed urban areas—must now ask an even harder question: Should they support a man who appears willing to tolerate unethical, antidemocratic practices in pursuing goals that may ultimately make ours a more just and compassionate nation?

To this question there is no obvious answer. But the subtleties here should not obscure the overall message: The scandal over political donations is in important respects a logical development given the character of the man we elected president. Perhaps the most frightening lesson of this affair is the reminder that those most willing to compromise their ideals remain the most likely to get elected. There is little reason to think this will change any time soon. □

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Kenneth P. Jameson

CRISIS IN ECUADOR

Who's in charge here?

On February 5, nearly 3 million Ecuadorans—about one-quarter of the population—demonstrated in the streets against the president they had elected the previous July. Abdalá Bucaram had embarrassed them by his crassness—he was pictured widely with a showgirl on his lap—and had outraged the entire nation which sensed a thinly disguised effort to establish a family-based kleptocracy. The demonstrators carried signs that read, "Too much circus, too little bread." Even the generally conservative Catholic church was thrust into a public role the previous week when the cathedral in Quito was occupied by antigovernment protestors from the indigenous movement and when individual religious, with the tacit approval of the hierarchy, spoke out against the government. On February 2, the Jesuits had published a half-page ad in the Quito daily, *El Comercio*, declaring that "we can no longer remain quiet." Their statement called for the church to "openly condemn the direction this government has decided to take" and encouraged "Ecuadorian Christians to

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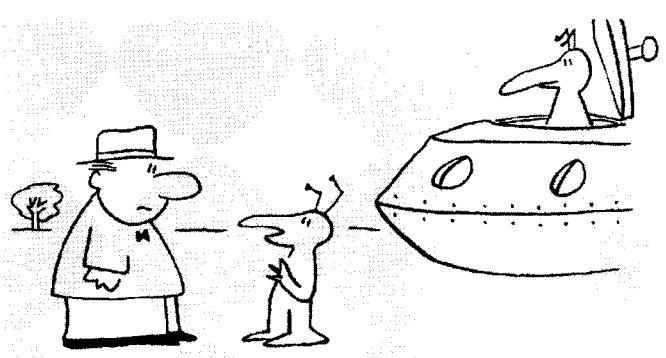
demonstrate their disagreement and to seek alternatives based on the gospel of Jesus Christ."

I was in Ecuador at the time of the nationwide protest; it exemplified Latin American magic realism at full tilt. On February 5, Congress approved a motion to remove Bucaram for medical incapacity. For the next five days there were three claimants to the presidency: Bucaram, Vice-president Rosalia Arteaga, and the president of the Congress, Fabián Alarcón. As there was no way to decide among them since the Constitution is ambiguous on the issue and there is no independent judiciary, the military brokered an agreement. First Arteaga was installed as president; then, three days later, Congress got its turn, choosing Alarcón as interim president for the next eighteen months.

For several weeks following Bucaram's departure, newspapers competed to disclose the ineptitude and corruption of his administration. Any new administration is likely to be an improvement, but many difficulties lie ahead. The three major political parties refused to enter the new Alarcón government, and the "social movements" that had played a major role in opposing Bucaram broke with Alarcón when he failed to deliver on cabinet appointments. How ironic that one of the positive international accomplishments of the Reagan-Bush era, the expansion of electoral democracy in Latin America, might be threatened by popular movements acting outside the bounds of electoral democracy. And there are other elements in the Ecuadorian situation that bear monitoring as well.

A precipitating factor in the Bucaram ouster was widespread cynicism in Ecuador over politics in general. Corruption, of course, is not new in the country. In the previous administration, the vice-president had to flee the country after accusations of misuse of funds. But Bucaram, elected largely for his fiery critiques of the Ecuadoran oligarchs, soon made corruption overt and pervasive, with benefit going to his own party and enriching his family.

Another contributor to the unrest was widespread opposition to the neoliberal economic policies that Bucaram ineptly adopted, despite his initial populist appeal. He was planning to privatize the telephone system and had proposed an Argentine policy of linking money creation to the amount of dollar or gold reserves, in effect allowing Ecuador's monetary policy to be set by the U.S. Fed. When the government reneged on a longstanding agreement to transfer 15 percent of central-government revenues to regional and municipal governments, a group called the Quito Assembly—composed of business, agricultural, and political leaders—demanded the funding be reinstated. Cutbacks in social expenditures and threats to organized workers energized other groups, including the Coordinator of Social Movements and the United Workers Front, which had been marginalized from national influence in recent years. Even the U.S. ambassador, Leslie Alexander, got into the act, criticizing the level of corruption: He noted a shipment worth $8,000 for which customs officials had the temerity to demand a $12,000 bribe. The final straw was Bucaram's imposition of dramatic price increases for essentials such as cooking gas, electricity, and telephone services. As the president became desperate in the days before February 5, he first reduced the increases and then annulled them. But the moves only succeeded in mobilizing the opposition.



"Good heavens, no. Don't take us to your leader—we're **anarchists!"**

One distinct impression I had about the demonstrations was that the participants were having fun. There were masterful caricatures of the leading villains, theatrical displays of the naked citizens of Ecuador being tormented by "Abdalá and the Forty Thieves," loud and poetic chants, housewives banging pots and pans, and even a *Macarena* composed for the occasion and broadcast widely in the media.

One key factor in the generally peaceful transfer of power was the self-restraint of the Ecuadorian military. The army did not intervene to enforce a state of emergency and suspension of constitutional guarantees proclaimed by Bucaram's minister of defense, and it emerged as the only force capable of forging a political compromise. In the process, it gained a great deal of prestige, a fact that could prove bothersome in the future. For the military already sees itself as a separate, quasi-independent power, and conducts a number of economic activities on its own behalf, including sponsoring educational institutions that cater to civilians. These developments represent a gathering cloud over the future of Ecuadorian democracy.

As Ecuador prepares for new national elections seventeen months from now, tensions can be expected to rise. The February protests evidenced deep structural weaknesses in Ecuador's political institutions: ambiguities in the Constitution about presidential succession; the absence of an independent judiciary; the politicization of oversight agencies; and the growing independence of the military. Agreement has been reached that some of these issues need to be addressed, yet there is no assurance that fundamental, systemic change will occur. Were the energy of February's street-democracy protests combined with a real plan for reform, and perhaps a good dose of liberation theology, some fundamental problems might be dealt with. But such vision and resolve seem to be lacking. □

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PROTECTING THE GUILTY

Did John Salvi deserve his fate?

Stephen J. Pope

On December 30, 1994, John Salvi III went on a murderous rampage at two Brookline, Massachusetts, abortion clinics that left five people wounded and two women—Lee Ann Nichols, thirty-eight, and Shannon Lowney, twenty-five—dead. The twenty-four-year-old apprentice hair stylist had paranoid delusions involving an international Masonic conspiracy against the Catholic church. Moving in the shadows of the extreme fringe of the anti-abortion movement, Salvi's actions were anything but "prolife." On March 18, 1996, he was convicted of the murders and given two life sentences.

Salvi had served eight months of his sentence when on November 19, 1996, he was found dead in his cell at the maximum security state prison at Walpole, Massachusetts. His body lay under the bunk, a cotton gag stuffed in his mouth, a plastic trash-can liner tied around his head with his shoelaces, and his hands and feet bound by crude slipknots. A grimmer scene would be hard to imagine. Ruling out foul play, the report by the chief medical examiner's office determined that Salvi took his own life by means of asphyxiation. A final review, produced by the University of Massachusetts at the request of the state, concluded that Salvi should have received more attention from Department of Corrections' mental-health professionals. After his incarceration he was seen only once by a psychiatrist whose examination was described as "brief and unsatisfactory." Prison officials "failed to notice that Salvi's mental state was deteriorating, communicate among each other about his condition, or accept an offer from his lawyers that they consult with private psychiatrists who were aware of his problems" (*Boston Globe*, February 13, 1997).

Corrections officials say that Salvi's family never told them he was in danger of suicide (this claim seems to be disputed), but the officials themselves, not Salvi's family, have the training, expertise, and authority to make this determination. Furthermore, corrections officials attempted to avoid responsibility for not referring him to Bridgewater on the grounds that Salvi himself denied that he was mentally ill. How can nontreatment be justified on the basis of a self-assessment by a man whom state psychiatrists had previously and publicly described as mentally ill? Corrections officials pled ignorance, but sometimes ignorance is voluntary and is used to excuse what, in fact, is gross negligence. "Looking the other way," especially when it comes to vulnerable people (and people who are aggressive in one context can be highly vulnerable in another), can be a form of complicity.

Salvi's fate has prompted a barrage of questions. Some concern particulars: Why was he permitted to have implements that could be used for suicide in a cell where he was isolated twenty-three hours a day? These and other questions lead to broader concerns about procedures for assessing potential suicides (it was the sixth suicide of the year within the Massachusetts prison system); the treatment of the mentally ill within the criminal justice system; and levels of funding for mental-health services for prisoners (estimates are that 10 to 25 percent of the prison population suffer from some form of serious mental illness).

Salvi's treatment also raises an important moral question about our society at large: What did we as a society owe Salvi the convicted murderer? Our first response to this question might be to say that we ought to respect his human rights, the basic claims of justice granted even to those who properly lose their civil rights due to incarceration. Gratuitous injuries are not condoned, physical security should be provided, punishment may not be "cruel and unusual." This

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structure of legal protections reveals an underlying sense of obligation to the criminal as a human being. Through its penal institutions, society continues to express a moral will toward even its most dangerous aggressors.

But are we supposed to treat morally those who have treated others so immorally, like the killer of Shannon Lowney and Lee Ann Nichols? Many would say that Salvi deserved nothing but contempt, and certainly not good will. For one thing, good will is usually reciprocal and Salvi's will was anything but good. The reciprocity ethic is summed up in Sigmund Freud's modified golden rule: "Love thy neighbor as thy neighbor loves thee"—treat other people as they treat us; I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine. In this view, Salvi's horrendous murder of Lowney and Nichols should be responded to in kind. Some thought he should get the death penalty. Others have been quietly satisfied with the state's failure to protect his life: an eye for an eye counts, even if Salvi was his own executioner.

Though this ethic of reciprocity has many defenders, there are sound reasons to question the channeling of good will in this way. For one thing, it is based on a misunderstanding of "good will" as "sympathetic" or "approving of." "Bilateral" good will means being favorably disposed toward another—as when a saleswoman generates "good will" in her customers. Good will in another sense is "unilateral," and simply means willing what is good, proper, right for another. Thus we can have "good will" toward the murderer while at the same time being horrified by his heinous acts. A good will desires that the criminal comes to a realization of the terrible evil he has done, seeks a conversion of heart, establishes a more authentic humanity, learns to care for others, and understands the need for forgiveness and reparation (if it can be attained).

...how we affirm the worth of persons is the litmus test for the decency of our society.

Second, the ethic of reciprocity—do to others as they do to you—can have serious disintegrative social effects. Contempt generates ever more contempt, degradation of one leads to degradation of another, violence by one person inspires violence in the victim. This vicious cycle was captured succinctly in Gandhi's terse warning that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. We can see in our society an increasingly harsh and "get tough" attitude to crime that includes the return of chain gangs, the adoption of stun belts, and an increase in capital punishment. These methods of deterrence can backfire, however, as the 20,000-member American Correction Association has argued before Congree (*see, New York Times*, March 11). Such practices "result in a hardening of criminal offenders"—their increased corruption and deformation, not their correction and reformation.

Third, we have to think more carefully about the *grounds* of good will: Are we to care about others because they have earned it or simply because they are human beings? This is the key question and it concerns us all. If asked the question: "Does the concern and respect that we owe to others ultimately depend on their accomplishments, their status in society, their productivity?" we would all say, "no," of course not. We recoil in horror at the Nazi designation of "life unworthy of life." We oppose euthanasia because we believe that human beings deserve respect whether or not they are productive members of society. This is obviously the case for people who are mentally incompetent. Perhaps this is why describing Salvi as a paranoid schizophrenic carries so much weight—if so, perhaps it elevates the level of moral claim he had on us.

It's natural to have a special concern for the well-being of those who are especially good; this is why, for example, the world attends to word of Mother Teresa's medical condition. But does the concern and respect that we owe to others ultimately *depend* upon their personal moral goodness? Is being good, or at least decent, a *necessary condition* for human concern? I would say "no," and for the same reason, that it doesn't depend on achievement or productivity.

Good will is fundamentally a *unilateral* attitude of respect for others in virtue of their humanity. The original "golden rule" requires us to treat others as we would like to be treated. You do not have to qualify for this golden rule and it is not abandoned when it is not reciprocated. Immanuel Kant argued in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: "I cannot deny all respect even to a vicious man as a man; I cannot withdraw at least the respect that belongs to him in his quality as a man, even though by his deeds he makes himself unworthy of it."

This "unilateral" feature of morality is solidly established in our moral practices. It is why, for instance, we give drug dealers the right to a fair trial even if they have no respect for justice; why we don't publicly humiliate or execute our prisoners of war even if our enemies do; and why we don't condone Bosnian Muslim atrocities on the grounds that the Bosnian Serbians have done the same or worse.

Great moral authorities of our own time have expressed this common principle in a wide diversity of settings. In his 1990 New Year's address, Vaclav Havel challenged his country to overcome the disintegrative legacy of totalitarianism by embracing the fundamental principle that "every human suffering concerns every other human being." Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke in a similar vein about the dignity of the poor: "All life is interrelated. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich. We are inevitably our brother's keeper because we are our brother's brother."

Christians, of course, have an even more profound motive for exercising the kind of unilateral good will that is un-

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derstood by humanistic ethics. We believe that human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) and that, not only does God love all people, "God is love" (1 John 4:16). We also affirm that this love holds steady regardless of our ignorance and sin. Theologian Karl Rahner once noted that many Catholics are in practice semi-Pelagians. We assume that we freely take the first step toward God and that in some sense we earn God's saving love by our good works. This semi-Pelagianism carries with it the dangerous ethical implication that one must earn the right to be a recipient of love, concern, and even respect. Opposed to this view is the fundamental Christian belief that we are saved by gratuitous divine love.

Christians, then, have the strongest of reasons to extend compassion even to the murderer. John Paul II, reflecting in *Evangelium vitae* on God's treatment of Cain after the murder of his brother, observed that "not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this."

Should we, then, respect people who have no respect for the lives of others? Yes. We can "respect" them in the sense that we can and must honor the humanity of those who act inhumanely. We do not admire, approve, or esteem Salvi's actions, attitudes, or beliefs, but even he was our brother. It may run against the grain of human nature to say this, but our fundamental respect for others as human beings should be negated neither by their wickedness nor by their madness.

If this is true, there is a way in which Salvi's mental status—an issue which loomed large during his trial—ought to have been irrelevant to our good will. By this I mean that even if Salvi was "faking" mental illness (and psychiatrists testifying for the state at the trial acknowledged his mental illness, though the jurors did not acquit by reason of insanity), and even if he knowingly and voluntarily killed his victims in cold blood, he nevertheless ought to have remained the object of our moral concern.

It needs to be said, of course, that the *content* of what we will for others might very much depend on what they have done or not done. Because what is willed has to be shaped in accordance with what is right, good will for the criminal cannot obstruct justice for his victims and society. Good will is thus not to be confused with mistakenly taking the perpetrator for a victim. Holding people accountable for the evil they have done—when indeed they are genuinely answerable for their conduct—is a way of honoring their humanity, their freedom, their capacity for reasonable action and moral responsibility. Far from being at odds, retributive justice, properly exacted, serves the good of the criminal as well as that of his victims and society at large. Good will for Salvi thus need not be confused with some kind of softhearted unconditional love that ignores the evil that he had done.

Public servants like corrections officials must represent the best moral lights of our society, not the worst. Public institutions, whether we like it or not, are expressions of the will of society. Governor William F. Weld's order to expand the investigation into the Salvi case was a step in the right direction, but it was only a remedial effort to address the effects of unconscionable neglect. (Under the Weld administration, state spending for mental-health services at Bridgewater has been cut significantly while funding for prison construction has escalated.)

Policy matters in this domain ultimately refer to the worth of persons, and how we affirm the worth of persons is the litmus test for the decency of our society. If we want to live in a decent society where human dignity is respected, we have to respect the dignity of everyone, including people like Salvi. □

Deirdre Cornell

Prayer Grows a Body

Freed from the charge of my grandmother's soul
(Pray for the family living and dead,
pray for your self, pray for the world),
I no longer pray the rosary at night
but string my own.
Its beginning found not in my body
not in my mother's body
but in the hushed breath of Irish and Italian women
fingering strands of wood, crystal, glass, and plastic
for perhaps seven hundred years.

I have given over that task for a while.

My body is stringing holiness
cell by cell, precious bone
by precious bone.
Leaving nothing out,
knotting tiny vertebrae
in small, tight formation,
like a rosary curled in the palm of your hand.

But when it springs forth,
unfurled in symmetry,
multiplied in length—
then is the time to pray.
It will climb hand over fist
the rope of my spine,
wrestling each mystery
as it labors toward light.
Each bead of bone and blood will testify to
that struggle
when the child someday asks, wailing, "Why was I
ever born?"

You were born to become a rosary,
a thread that ties us from one world to the next.

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Daniel R. Barnes

Anniversary

for Ramon Barnes,
1918–1954

"They have pierced my hands and my feet;
they have numbered all my bones."
—from the Roman Catholic ritual
for Good Friday

I have numbered all your bones, dear father,
buttered your onionskin back as I was told
to keep bedsores away; in telling my beads
I have fingered each spinal stone as,
strangled with scapulars and driven to extremes,
you begin to slip away from me for good.

Now, your nectar drained, you, no longer
you, are prepared to be fetched and carried
to yet another bed. Your ursine frame's diminished
down to this: they weigh it in at sixty-seven pounds.

I gather it up like kindling, steal it away
from these pastel rooms, these hushed and city voices,
take it back into those Iroquoian hills

and forward into these,
filled now to overflowing with my other dark children:

Today, a small boy bends with his father in a cellar,
intent on sifting the earth below for traces
of a presence. He seeks treasure: fossils,
utensils, tools; icons and charms;
a trove of talismans: he finds
instead a moldy old cigar box
filled with flints.

I tell my son the lesson of this hour:
that these holy relics alone have served
to mark the wound of forty winters past:
For still, my father, I am stunned,
brained by your prized stone battle-axe;
your arrowheads lie buried in my breast.

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THE DESCENT INTO HELL

Abandonment or a victory over death?

Jerry Ryan

The first time I assisted at the Russian Orthodox Easter Vigil at Saint Mary's in Chelsea, I was disoriented and somewhat disappointed. Everything was "strange," to say the least. There was an emphasis on death, personified as a protagonist of the Paschal drama, as though the liturgy were looking back over its shoulder instead of rejoicing in the Resurrection. The hymnology struck me as extremely naive: Adam and Eve kept popping up, Death was always complaining about being deceived, there were constant references to the tomb and the custom of visiting the graveyards during Easter week. This is not what I am used to. In the Roman liturgy, where the symbolism is much clearer and more logical, we accompany Christ in his Passion and rejoice in his Resurrection as his personal triumph over death. He has been glorified, his integrity restored and magnified, and we, in our turn, hope to share in this victory.

It was the constant references to the Descent into Hell during the Byzantine Paschal liturgy that left me most uncomfortable. Even though this mystery is an article of the Apostles' Creed, the Latin tradition has relegated it to the background—almost as an embarrassment. It is seldom commented upon. When it is, the commentary is usually limited to 1 Peter 3:19 which refers to the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison. These "spirits" are generally understood as the righteous who died before the coming of Christ and who resided in the "heaven of the patriarchs," a sort of limbo of anticipation. The "preaching" of Christ to the righteous would be the revelation of the redemptive incarnation to them and their subsequent introduction into the beatific vision. For me, the imagery of Christ breaking the gates of hell, leading forth the multitude of the righteous, and trampling death underfoot was related to this very "materialist" conception of the activity of the disembodied soul of Christ among the dead and/or demons.

In an article in the *New York Times* on Holy Saturday last year (April 6, 1996), Peter Steinfels opposed the insights of the late Hans Urs von Balthasar to these elaborate scenarios about Christ's descent to the underworld. Von Balthasar relied heavily on the mystical experiences of Adrienne von Speyr for his "Holy Saturday theology." For twenty years, von Speyr relived the Passion during Holy Week. On the afternoon of Good Friday she would fall into a trance until early Easter Sunday morning and, in this trance-like state, she would experience the descent into hell with Jesus. The disembodied soul of Jesus is in a state of total passivity and solitude, psychologically cut off from others and cut off from God. Hell is the place where God is absent, where there is neither faith nor hope nor love. It is the experience of sin in its essence, of the "second death," the experience of the absence of God and thus of a meaninglessness without light. He who is without sin enters, through obedience, into the absurd. And *because* he is without sin, he experiences the second death in all its horror. This is what it means, in its starkest reality, to assume the sin of the world. According to von Balthasar, in this state of utter dereliction and abandonment during the *triduum mortis*, the knowledge and hope of the Resurrection have lost all meaning, all sense of time has evaporated. The Resurrection will come as an abrupt surprise, as a "bolt of lightning." In such a context, the Eastern imagery depicting the "activity" of Christ in the netherworld appears not only as archaic and infantile but

"I'll talk to Pontius Pilate, but don't expect miracles."

Jerry Ryan *is a free-lance writer who lives in Chelsea, Massachusetts. His most recent article in* Commonweal *was "Twice on Sundays," January 12, 1996.*

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as, quite frankly, misleading. Von Balthasar criticizes it as such.

What von Speyr described and what von Balthasar elaborated on would appear at first glance to be the contrary of what the Byzantine liturgy celebrates. But perhaps not. My own "bolt of lightning" came during my second Holy Week at Saint Mary's. It was an intuition that, in celebrating the Descent into Hell, the Eastern church was tapping into something on another level altogether. This Eastern understanding is concerned not so much with the activity or passivity or psychology of Jesus during the three days his body lay in the tomb, but with the theological implications of the *triduum mortis*. The *descensus ad inferos* represents the *act* of the victory of life over death by the entrance of Life into death, destroying death from within: Where Life has entered, death can no longer exist. He who died on the Cross and entered into death is one of the Holy Trinity, the source of all life. That is why death is truly vanquished and the gates of hell are shattered.

The emphasis here is on the ontological effects of the Paschal mystery, which knows no limits of time or space. For through Jesus, life enters into the kingdom of death and overcomes its terrible darkness. As the Eastern liturgy proclaims, "Adam exults and Eve rejoices" as the bonds of hell are broken. Adam and Eve, representing humanity sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, witness death losing its power over us. God is life, and what happens in his life happens to life itself, to the lives of all. We touch here on the very essence of the redemption: "Death is swallowed up in victory....O Death where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55).

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Other aspects of Jesus' redemptive incarnation—the sacrificial and the propitiatory aspects, and the Resurrection itself—now come into sharper focus, for the physical resurrection of Christ is the effective sign of his triumph over death, and is accomplished during his three days in the tomb, a time that itself now becomes lifegiving. There is absolutely nothing to fear anymore: Death and sin have been vanquished. Even when we enter into the realm of death, we will find Jesus *there*. So powerful and all-embracing is this concept of the triumph over Hades that Origen was led to believe that *nothing* was excluded, that Hades itself was transformed into a paradise and that even the demons were saved.

I have touched here briefly on the fundamental differences of perspective between the mysticisms of Orient and Occident. In Western mysticism, the tendency is to envisage God and his Christ as an objective presence, exterior to us and transcending us. We thus strive to arrive at an intimacy with him. We try to imitate the Christ of the Gospels. We venerate the Blessed Sacrament as an objective presence of Jesus in his glorified state. For the Eastern church, God's presence is experienced as interior: Our relationship with Jesus is that of a shared life, of an indwelling, a divinization, in the Spirit, of our own lives. This is, of course, a question of dominating insights, of emphasis, and not a strict dichotomy.

This difference might account for the diverse manners in which the mystery of the Descent is contemplated in the two traditions. If we consider what happened to God during the *triduum mortis*, the perspective of von Balthasar makes us focus on the death of the Word in all its brutal realism and seriousness. The Latin tradition contemplates with tenderness and awe an event that took place in our history. The Eastern churches focus on the effects of this mystery, what it means for our life, and for our death. As the Easter antiphon repeats, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life." This is not just an historical event of the past but an activity taking place among us now. It is as though the Resurrection of Christ were incomplete until it culminates in the resurrection of all in the new heaven and the new earth.

This might also explain why in the Byzantine liturgy the Resurrection is inseparable from the Descent into Hell. The Descent into Hell is the image of our present age. The Resurrection of Christ is the sign and guarantee of the final victory. For nothing is more absurd or contradictory than the entry of Life into death. Yet this is precisely what our faith proposes. The Western church marvels that Life *truly* died, truly suffered death in all its bitterness and disarray. The church of the East rejoices that death is thereby destroyed. And thus, in their mutual complementary testimony, Orthodoxy and Catholicism proclaim the riches of the Paschal mystery and the wonders of the love with which we are loved. How much would each be enriched by listening to the other! □

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Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill

A BIBLE FOR THE PLOWBOY

Tyndale at the New York Public Library

At last count, the Bible has been published in more than 1,700 English vernaculars. It is difficult, amid the proliferation, to comprehend a time when translating the Scriptures into English could be fatal. Such was the case for William Tyndale (ca. 1494-1536), English reformer, Catholic priest, and scholar. Professing the desire to "cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures" than the poorly educated clergy, he defied the church and put the Bible into everyday English. His achievement was twofold: He translated from the original Greek, bypassing the church-sanctioned Latin Vulgate. And he printed his Bibles pocket-sized so that they would be less expensive and more widely available. Arrested and imprisoned outside of Brussels in 1535, he was executed as a heretic in 1536.

Tyndale is the subject of a very good exhibition on view at the main branch of the New York Public Library through May 17. "Let There Be Light" sets forth the context for Tyndale's life and work with a splendiferous array of books and artifacts, some 100 in all, drawn from the holdings of the British Library (where the exhibition originated) and the New York Public Library.

Upon entering Gottesman Hall, the viewer sees the exhibition's crown jewels, a pair of Tyndale's New Testaments. One was bought by the British Library for more than £1 million in 1994, the other was discovered just months ago, undisturbed in its original binding, in the Stuttgart State Library. They are the only complete copies of the 1526 printing that survive, and they are magical. One can picture Tyndale's plough-boy opening for the first time to the Gospel of Mark: "This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God, as it is written in the prophets...." It is as if a light goes on. Nestled between these two volumes is the only surviving document in Tyndale's hand, a letter written from his Belgian prison pleading for some basic comforts as winter approached, and for his Hebrew Bible and grammar.

The exhibition concerns both the politics of translation and, fittingly for the library, the power of words. The texts on view span centuries, stretching from a medieval illustrated manuscript of the Vulgate, Saint Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation, to the *Black Bible Chronicles* (1993), in which Pharaoh says to Moses and Aaron, "Look, boys, why are you here? Prove to me that your Almighty is so fired up hot." There is a fascinating panel that compares translations of various biblical passages. Its effect is to underscore the lasting nature of Tyndale's achievement. After all, how can one improve upon "In the beginning, God created..."?

In Tyndale's time, access to the Bible was severely limited. Because the church approved only the Latin Vulgate for use, and because only the educated could read Latin, the everyday person's contact with Scripture was minimal. For decades leading up to the Reformation, as the exhibition shows, biblical translation and calls for church reform were natural partners: Church practice and doctrine, supported by specific renderings in the Vulgate, were unassailable so long as the Bible remained inaccessible. The Bible became the great divider between the "establishment" church, which feared alternative interpretations of its founding document, and the reformers, who urged greater access to the Scriptures.

Thus the Bibles themselves tell the story best, and there are plenty of them on hand. Here, for example, are four Lollard Bibles, translated into English from the Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his followers in the 1380s, and condemned as heretical, in part because of their association with Wycliffe's radical, anticlerical Lollard movement. (These led to the 1408 Constitutions of Oxford, which forbade "unauthorized" translation of the Scriptures into English and threatened excommunication for anyone who read an English Bible.)

In the rest of Europe, though vernacular translations were not officially approved, they were in practice unopposed. Among the European vernacular Bibles in the exhibition are the Ferrara Bible (1553), a printed Spanish

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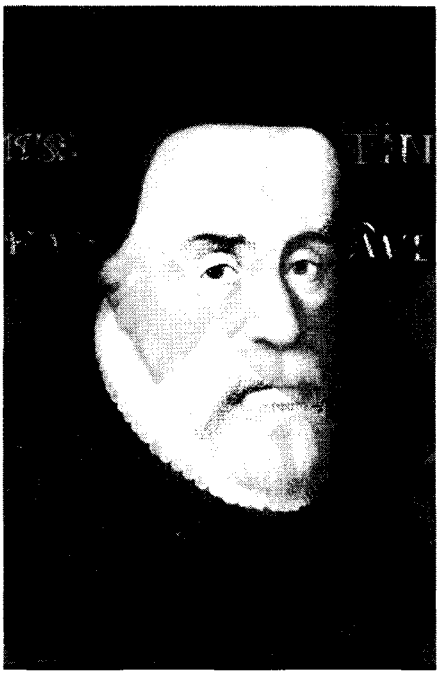
edition of the Old Testament for use by Jews exiled from the Iberian Peninsula by the Inquisition, and a 1541 Swedish Bible with a full-page illustration in Exodus of a Scandinavian Aaron resembling a refugee from the Ring Cycle, horned helmet and all.

As the "new learning" of the Renaissance spread across Europe, translators and reformers gathered strength, and the fruits of their work, so important to Tyndale, are on view in the exhibition. In 1516, Erasmus printed his *Novum instrumentum*, the New Testament in its original Greek with a new Latin version, in which he essentially corrected the Vulgate and declared in the preface that the Bible should be translated into the languages of lay people. There is Martin Luther's 1522 German translation of the Greek New Testament that could be understood in every region of Germany. And there is the marvelous Complutensian Polyglot, published in Spain in 1522. An imposing tome, it sets on a single page the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew), the Vulgate, a new Latin translation, and, at the bottom, Aramaic commentaries on the Hebrew. Its blocks of text, orderly and varied, spread across the page like quilting squares.

Tyndale, an Oxford-educated scholar and priest, was familiar with most if not all of these works, and they influenced him profoundly. He began reading the New Testament in Greek and found considerable divergence between what he read there and the theology and practice of the church. He came to believe passionately that the Bible belonged in the hands of the people. When in 1524 Cuthbert Tunstall, the bishop of London, declined to grant him the necessary permission to translate, Tyndale fled to Germany and into the doctrinal arms of Martin Luther. There, supported by an English merchant named Humphrey Monmouth, he began printing a New Testament that he was forced to abandon after only ten pages. Known as the "Cologne Fragment," the surviving eight sheets are at the exhibition, providing the viewer a sense of the fragility of Tyndale's mission and the remarkable tenacity he brought to it. Fleeing to Worms in 1526, Tyndale printed 3,000 copies of a complete New Testament, smuggling them into England in bales of cloth.



The reaction of the English bishops was swift and savage. Bishop Tunstall gave Sir Thomas More permission to read Tyndale's works so that More could refute them in English. Thus began More's series of intemperate attacks on Tyndale, recounted here with the texts of More's *Dialogue* (1529), Tyndale's *An Answer* (1531), and More's *Confutation* (1532). The bishops used stronger tactics. Tunstall had preached at a ceremony in Saint Paul's in November 1526 at which copies of Tyndale's Bible were burned. The archbishop of Canterbury dunned local priests and bishops for money to buy the Bibles for burning, and the exhibition includes a letter from Bishop Nix, who sent the archbishop ten marks and congratulations for his "gracious and blessed deed." Under Tunstall's successor, John Stokesley, the government was sanctioned to burn heretics alive, both men and women.

Tyndale was shocked by the sacrilege and savagery, and he began to write prologues, polemics, and marginal notes to his translations that were more sharply critical of the church. The most important of these, also on display in the exhibition, is *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528), Tyndale's response to More's charges that the reformers were seditious and treasonous.

During this time Tyndale had also begun to study Hebrew, which he found even more amenable to English than Greek. On view in the library's exhibition are his translations of the Pentateuch (1530) and the Book of Jonah (1531), which, with its prophetic call to preach the word of God, was an important text for reformers. Tyndale's greatest achievement, his revised New Testament, appeared in 1534, and the exhibition boasts Anne Boleyn's personal copy.

Centuries away from the politics of Tyndale's case, we may judge his work on its merits. He combined excellent scholarship in Greek and Hebrew with an ear for rhythm and cadence, creating a simple, direct style that mirrored the *koinou* Greek of the New Testament.

Tyndale's legacy to Christians and to speakers of English goes far beyond the well-known quotations that are splashed on the exhibition panels like sound bites: "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and "fight the good fight." He demonstrated conclusively that English could be flexible, beautiful, and direct, a suitable vehicle for the word of God. In 1611, those who produced the Authorized Version of the Bible (the King James), drew heavily on Tyndale and often printed his translations unaltered.

Tyndale's determination to make the Bible available collided with the insistence by the "powers that be" (a Tyndale phrase) on controlling interpretation and access. This tension between tradition and change, ecclesiastical authority (with the unity it insures) and private conviction still mark the life of the church. As the beautiful and evocative texts of the library's exhibition attest, Tyndale still challenges us to wrestle with the sometimes contradictory prerogatives of obedience and conscience. But above all, Tyndale's work is a call to learn and cultivate the word of God in our everyday lives. □

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill *is the co-author, with Joseph Papp, of* Shakespeare Alive *(Bantam, 1988).*

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The frontier that failed

Bad Land
An American Romance
Jonathan Raban
Pantheon, $25, 324 pp.

Rand Richards Cooper

By 1909, when the U. S. Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act, doubling the size of federal land grant parcels to 320 acres, America's pioneering phase lay mostly behind her. Lewis and Clark were mythic figures a century old; decades had passed since the Central and the Union Pacific linked up in Utah; Little Bighorn was a fading memory; towns and cities of all sizes dotted the West. Yet some places on the map still had to be filled in, like the semi-arid plains of western South Dakota and eastern Montana.

The Milwaukee Road rail line had just been completed through these badlands; settlements were needed. An odd mix of expansionist zeal and Jeffersonian political anxiety had driven nineteenth-century homesteading—"Land without population is a wilderness," proclaimed rail magnate James J. Hill, "and population without land is a mob"—and now it proved good for one last burst of action. Congress was duly lobbied, railroad agents spread pamphlets far and near; and once more the dreamers came, from the cities of the East and Midwest, from the nations of Europe, packing emigrant trains headed for places they themselves were still to create.

The hopes they came with, the lives they staked out, and the failures they endured—this is the stuff of *Bad Land: An American Romance*, Jonathan Raban's superb new study of the prairie rail towns of eastern Montana. Raban, an English writer transplanted to the American West, pays a debt of tribute to those immigrants who preceded him, in harder times and under infinitely harsher conditions. Unjaded by the moral costs of westward ho-ism, indeed haunted by its sorrowful grandeur, Raban reconstructs the lives of people who "came over, went broke, quit their homes, and moved on elsewhere": a story "so American," he notes, "that some Americans would not recognize it as a story."

An Englishman raised in a world of green gardens and tidy villages turns out to make an ideal chronicler of life on the desolate Montana plains. Raban's motivating impulse is awe, at the immensity both of the landscape and of the American dreaming that sent people out into it, flushed with faith in this country's "miraculous power of individual redemption." *Bad Land* sets out to scrutinize the myth-making behind the miracle. A chapter titled "Fictions" surveys emblematic texts: paeans to growth such as James J. Hill's *Highways of Progress*; popular romances, with names like *The Simple Life* or *A Girl of the Limberlost*, exalting the virtues of rural life; primary-school readers with their sober lessons on the virtues of frugality. Raban traces the immense influence upon Montanans of Hardy W. Campbell's 1902 *Soil Culture Manual*, which counseled aggressive topsoil plowing to promote "capillary action" in the semi-arid plains, promising wheat yields of 40 bushels an acre and up. Subtitled "The Camel for the Sahara Desert," Campbell's "dry-farming" manual sold millions, taking a place alongside the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress* in the trio of sacred settler texts. Meanwhile, railroad pamphlets in a dozen languages spread the good news through Europe—complete with illustrations of farmers plowing up furrows of golden coins. All in all, Raban sums up, prospective homesteaders were given "no more real idea of Montana than they had of the dark side of the moon. But they were devout believers and imaginers."

Drawn from memoirs, interviews, and county historical records, the many personal stories told in *Bad Land* shine with humor and the glint of big risks being run. Raban also looks at artists—other devout imaginers confronting the badlands' forbidding perspectives. He offers a beguiling portrait of settler photographer Evelyn Cameron, in whose pictures houses appear "shaken out over the prairie like dice," and of the celebrated Hudson River School panoramist Albert Bierstadt and his struggles to sketch the seasicky monotony of the plains. The more they defeated his conventional romanticism, Raban argues, the more they induced in Bierstadt "the 'sensation of agreeable horror' that Burke defined as the essence of the sublime in nature." Adroitly Raban uses the responses of artists to highlight the picture of bleak prospects facing the homesteaders. Bierstadt is a painter "humbled by featureless space." Thomas Hart Benton admires the "brute magnitude" of the plains, where "the universe is stripped to dirt and air, to wind, dust, clouds, and the white sun," and "human effort is seen...in all its painful futility." Robert Louis Stevenson puts it most bluntly: "What livelihood," he muses, "can repay a creature for a life spent in this huge sameness?"

Not much of one, it turned out. The homesteaders' dreams were built on a narrow margin: prospering or perishing turned on the difference between twenty inches of rain a year and fifteen; and they got fifteen. Instead of the bounteous harvests promised by Campbell's crank theories, settlers faced a swiftly depleted topsoil and the prospect of a slow,

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hungering decline. In the summer of 1917 came plagues and pests, and drought not far behind. Ruin became inevitable. It was known as "starving out"—you stayed until there was nothing, and then you left.

Bad Land is crammed with facts worth knowing: that Rocky Mountain juniper grows to be 2000 years old; that fencing one's property was a far bigger project for the homesteader than building a house; that rural communities rigged primitive telephones to those fences known as "talkaphones," calling each other along the barbed wire long before the advent of dedicated lines. Raban is that rare writer equally enthusiastic about people, things, and ideas. His voice is urbane, and though he exploits shamelessly the special dispensation we grant the British to use obscure words ("nonage," "finical," "spatchcock," to name a few), he manages to get away with it, thanks in part to a charming self-deprecation.

Despite its companionable charm, however, this is serious, even profound writing, which gathers fateful drama as the settlers' high hopes and the plains' inhospitableness move toward their ineluctable collision. "You have to wonder what the government was up to," muses a descendant decades later, "the way they shipped people out here to just about the poorest damn land in the whole United States." And while irony is reserved for those who lured settlers with false promises, the transaction Raban cares most about lies not between man and man, but between man and nature. Nature's cruelty hangs menacingly over *Bad Land*. In the face of this abiding drama, with its wearying punishments and surprise redemptions, Raban's prose achieves at times a Conradian power.

Bad Land sends us out with an ideal traveler—an eager dilettante with a nose for a good story, an admiring attentiveness to other people's knowledge, and a ready sense of wonder. Raban finds ruins of the past everywhere. Abandoned farms outnumber survivors, and *Bad Land* opens with the author stopping to visit one. In the wrecked living room, mice nest in the sofa; a foldaway ironing board stands open. On the floor is a musty rubble of papers and books, including a copy of Campbell's *Soil Culture Manual*, and beneath it a notebook with the family budget—small expenditures which mount over time to a debt of $5688.90, the sum circled in a distraught hand.

It is an eerie, haunted moment, this look into how things fell apart. Raban says this story is so familiar to us Americans that we barely recognize it, but he's wrong about that. The truth is, it's a story we resist. Our national epic has been one of expansion and success, while the story of Montana—this chapter of it, at any rate—is one of contraction and failure. Raban tracks some of the former homesteaders and their children farther west, to Oregon and California, where many ended up working in manufacturing or defense. Interviewed decades later about their years on the plains, they seem hardly able to believe it was their own lives; they are disconnected, as from a period of psychic trauma.

The allure of abandoned places holds particular resonance for Americans, encapsulating both the promise of moving on and the dread of rootlessness, of disappearing without a trace. With thoughtful irony, Raban subtitles his book "An American Romance," by which I take it he means the romance of ruins, romanticism's melancholy tribute to the triumph of nature over human aspiration. Our national project has democratized ruin along with success, inviting Everyman to play in his own small way at Ozymandias, littering our landscape like no other country's with discarded hopes. Part travelogue, part social history, part meditation on the transience of human striving, Jonathan Raban's elegy for the homesteader era takes us on a poignant American journey, giving glimpses of a hardscrabble dream whose numbers finally just didn't add up. □

Rand Richards Cooper's *most recent book is* Big As Life *(Dial Press).*

WHAT IS MORALITY?

Liberating Conscience
Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology
Anne E. Patrick
Continuum, $24.95, 252 pp.

James F. Keenan

Since Vatican II there have been relatively few books on fundamental moral theology. Authors like Lisa Sowle Cahill, Christine Gudorf, Patricia Beattie Jung, and Phillip Keane have written on sexuality, while others like Edward Vacek and Stephen Pope have written on love. Richard Gula and Timothy O'Connell have given us superb textbooks for moral theology, but Gula, with his typical modesty, points out that his *Reason Informed by Faith* was basically a synthesis of contemporary writings. Really only a few Germans have written sustained, original, integrated book-length works in fundamental moral theology, and only Franz Boeckle's *Fundamental Moral Theology* was translated into English. For its uniqueness alone, Anne E. Patrick's *Liberating Conscience* is a work of considerable moment.

After decades of moralists writing essays (Joseph Fuchs and Richard McCormick, for instance, each pens articles and after several years collates them), Patrick's work gives us a sense that the extraordinary turmoil that has marked moral theology might be coming to an end. That turmoil is best understood, I think, not through particular issues like sexuality, birth control, or reproductive technology, but rather through something more fundamental, that is, the ecclesiological function of moral theology.

Until Vatican II, moral theologians settled questions. "Consult the approved authors," was a standard phrase by

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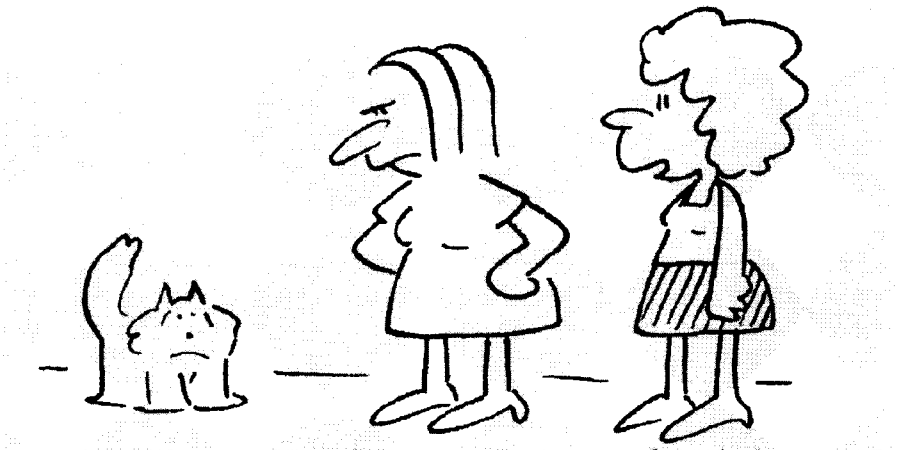
which bishops and popes remanded inquiries. But those who asked were mostly priests looking for answers to questions about the sins of their penitents. Those priests recognized in their moral theologians an extension of the hierarchy, for the moralists applied the teaching of the tradition to the contemporary situation with the same public sense of power and certainty as the latter. With Vatican II and *Humanae vitae*, moral theologians abdicated their arbitrating roles and began entertaining questions like what constitutes authority and what accounts for moral decision making. They occasionally commented on some neuralgic issues like birth control, abortion, and homosexuality, but for the most part they dealt with fundamental questions, reconstructing their own field of inquiry. And, instead of giving readers answers, they raised questions. They also invited readers to see how those trained in moral theology reason, so that the reader, in turn, could learn about the complexity of moral reasoning. Teacher rather than judge and arbiter captures the new ecclesiological vocation of the moral theologian as we finish the twentieth century.

As teacher, Patrick brings the reader to another foundational shift transforming fundamental moral theology. In her work, she abandons the old regime's singular concern to measure the object of the moral action, and replaces it with the conscience of the moral subject. And she presents conscience not as some*thing* worth observing, measuring, and forming; rather, she views conscience as "simply a *dimension of the self*, one central to our experience of moral agency."

Understanding the reader as moral agent, Patrick proposes and pursues the shift in paradigm emerging in moral theology. She recognizes the double task of proving the present paradigm irredeemable and of offering a worthy competitor. Thus, highlighting the ecclesiological function of moral theology, she describes the outgoing paradigm as basically a patriarchal instrument of social control. In these past centuries, moral theology was marked by an intolerance of circumstances, subjectivity, particularity, and doubt. Its appeal to the true as absolute, universally applicable, and unchanging provided a structure of mutual support for the ecclesiology that proposed it. Moreover, it advanced a profile of the virtues suitable for the structure: obedience, constancy, humility. In the long run, moral theology was less interested in considering the specifically morally right response to a particular situation and even less concerned with training the laity to develop their own unique consciences to make specific decisions: rather like the ecclesiology it embodied, classical moral theology promoted a universal conformity as normative for moral conduct.



"You're wasting your time, Helen—you can't impose moral standards on a cat."

Patrick proposes to liberate the conscience from this classical paradigm and

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from its own consequent dormancy and to locate it within an egalitarian-feminist paradigm. To promote an understanding of conscience as pro-active, the latter paradigm demands certain characteristics for one's conscience, for moral theologians, and for the church's leaders. These characteristics must be shared; otherwise the former will be held captive by the latter two. These traits, which Patrick treats throughout the text, are an attentiveness to the voices of all, particularly those marginalized and oppressed; an appreciation of ambiguity, indeterminacy, and plurality; a sensitivity to the function of language and narrative in our lives; and a regard for moral truth not as already-out-there-revealed-given, but as the object of a lifelong quest of critical inquiry. In sum, Patrick charges every reader to appropriate an egalitarian-feminist model as well as the liberating dispositions that constitute it.

These virtues are clearly internal and personal, and for that reason she constantly presents their embodiment in those whom she calls "truth-tellers." She presents those truth-tellers throughout the work by culling narratives of both those church members who confront the old paradigm and those fictional yet all too familiar heroes and heroines of the new dispensation. With finesse, she weaves in the characters from works by George Eliot, Elie Wiesel, Robert Bolt, Mary Gordon, Flannery O'Connor, Alan Paton, Joseph Heller, and Carlos Fuentes. Her call to be attentive to narrative, ambiguity, and language is modeled by her own eloquent storytelling.

In fact, the entire work is extraordinarily well written. Her prose is as attractive as her pedagogy. Moral theologians can read a page of Patrick, begin to recognize the thought of a particular author, and turn the page to find the right quote that perfectly summarizes the writer's work. Lay readers will find equal access by clear explanations and by great cases that illustrate her argument with brevity and exactness.

My only complaint is that she settles for the classical virtues without proposing new ones. With Plato, she is satisfied with justice as the virtue that prudence determines and temperance and courage help realize. But in our fragmented and conflicted world, the virtue (justice) for treating everyone equally competes with both the virtue (fidelity) for treating special relations particularly and the virtue (self-care) for responsibly recognizing the self as worthy of moral attention.

That complaint aside, Patrick makes a compelling case. Though at times her argument seems as combative as that of her opponents, she is singularly interested in replacing the overarching paradigm and that is, as so many Catholics know, a painful process. Reading her book, however, we become convinced that a theology of moral truth is only as valid as the ecclesiology that proposes it. □

James Keenan, S.J., *teaches at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology.*

A CONTINENT-SIZED BOOK

USA
John Dos Passos
Library of America, $40, 1,288 pp.

Edward T. Wheeler

The *imprimatur* of the Library of America is one indication of the significance of this book and, since the author was born 100 years ago, its republication is a commemoration. The first volume of Dos Passos's trilogy, *The 42nd Parallel*, appeared in 1930. With its companion volumes, *1919* and *The Big Money*, the entire work was issued in 1937 as *USA*, a thirties' book about the first three decades of the century—Progressivism to the Crash, with a strong central section on the war in France. Years ago I took a stab at reading *USA*, but was stopped by its apparatus—strange broken bits of "Newsreel" text—and narratives which didn't admit much friendly welcome. Happily, the passing of time has cleared up the nature of Dos Passos's masterpiece. I wish the book had been longer!

Reading about Dos Passos's life also brought revelations. He knew everyone of his extraordinary generation: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Cummings, most especially. He was a world traveler, lived abroad most of his childhood, was educated at Choate and Harvard, drove an ambulance in the World War I, was shelled, sniffed mustard gas, supported radical labor causes, and wrote and wrote, right to his death in 1970. He came to prefer the gospel of Henry Ford to that of Karl Marx, and alarmingly approved of Joseph McCarthy's hearings. But as a younger man, and especially in *USA*, his allegiance was clear.

> America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul...,have bought the laws and fenced the meadows and cut down the woods for pulp and turned our pleasant cities into slums and sweated the wealth out of our people and when they want to they hire the executioner to throw the switch.
>
> but do they know that the old words of the immigrants are being renewed in blood and agony tonight.

The case of Sacco and Vanzetti is the not-too-veiled allusion behind this selection from "The Camera Eye" section of *USA*, and the passage suggests how the novel's strange disruptions and its narratives interconnect.

So what is this work that bears such a portentous title? The three volumes tell in a disjunctive way the stories of twelve characters whose lives intersect directly or indirectly over a period of thirty

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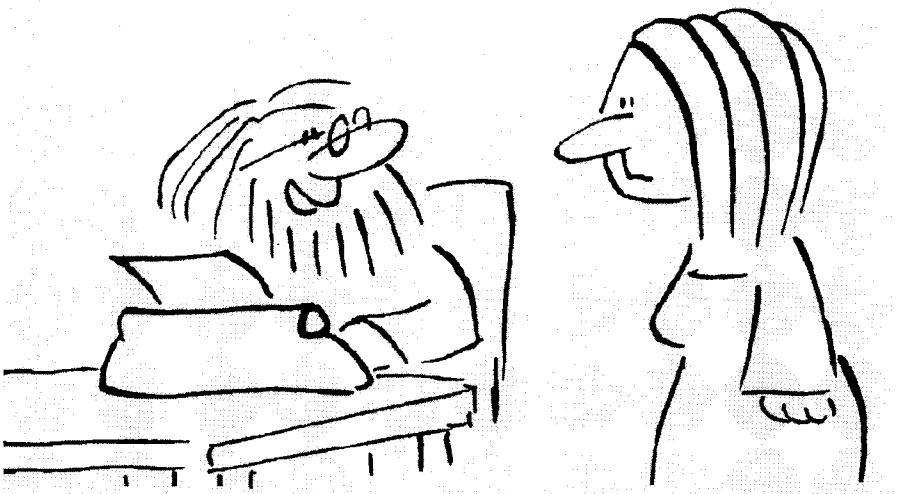
years. Keeping track of who is who is sometimes a matter of scribbling notes in the margins, for Dos Passos weaves the stories or the principals and their acquaintances in surprising and rewarding ways. The chapters bear the chief characters' names and are separated in turn by a series of devices similar to those which Hemingway used in his earlier *In Our Time*. "The Camera Eye," "Newsreel," and biographies of historical figures are bulging bits of apparatus that announce the book itself as designed or engineered.

In "The Camera Eye" the narrator's stream of consciousness announces the novel's perspective. It is often, as in the excerpt above, declamatory. The "Newsreel" segments show themselves as headlines, phrases torn from contemporary news accounts, bits of popular song, all put together in collages. The spare story lines bump up against the dense and broken "Newsreels." The reader is in turn taken within the narrator's consciousness to be immersed in events hinted at in the "Newsreel," and on occasion not released until the biography of a contemporary historical figure is told in a stylized, often judgmental way.

Dos Passos's literary modernism takes the injunction "Make It New" seriously. The work's mechanism won't let us rest in the illusion of organic life. Larger, brutal forces disrupt the stories of the six men and six women and make their coherence suspect. It is difficult for a contemporary reader not to be befuddled by the sheer stream of events: violent labor disputes, socialist protest, police repression, the Wobblies, Joe Hill, the revolution in Mexico, the war in Europe, Prohibition, Hollywood, land speculation in Miami, and above all New York as the center of financial power and working-class exploitation. (This handsome edition helpfully provides a chronology of events mentioned in the narrative.) We are drowned in speakeasy booze, asphyxiated by cigarettes, and whored or seduced in rites of passage into adulthood. The motor car, the aeroplane, the telephone, the stock market, and the almost frenzied mobility they help to promote: all of those bedrock features of contemporary life were then new, shaping and molding those who made them or made use of them.



"Oh, the novel is dead—I'm writing the Great American T-shirt."

Dos Passos's introductory section, almost a rhapsody which can't but summon, in a new style, the America of Walt Whitman, asks the reader to walk the streets of *USA* and hear voices; those voices, we understand, are the substance of the book to follow. They are the voices of America that won't be put into the old skins of the traditional novel form without bursting them.

Those sections which relate the lives of committed activists, Ben Compton, Don Stevens, and Mary French, provide a compelling sense of the labor strife of the first part of the century. (I confess that Dos Passos introduced me in large measure to this history.) Wobblie organizers, clandestine presses, the Paterson silk workers' strike, police and goon brutality—Dos Passos renders these events with extraordinary ease and deftness. And given the numbers of places he must take us to—nothing less than the entire nation—his achievement is the more remarkable. Some critics take him to task as being unable to present the political philosophy that informed people like John Reed, whose biography appears, or that of the most ideological of his characters. But the formal design of *USA* articulates its own awkward, philosophical questions by a type of artistic cunning. It is almost as if Dos Passos has engineered the book to make a reader ask, "What is it for?" The "it" is this nation of ours as well as the stylistic features that attempt to render it.

Dos Passos's sense of form, an artistic sureness which tips its hat to Joyce, Pound, and Eliot, gives much satisfaction—even as the lives of the twelve principals seem to crash into a self-loathing middle age. Form goes some way to explaining why a book of so doleful a message, so unrelieved a sense of failed promise, is enjoyable. There is God's plenty here, and in that creative life a type of blueprint for the soul. Critics point to the fact that the "Vag" (Vagrant) sections that frame the work set up contradictions as juxtapositions, the structure once again making meaning: America is a continent and a holding company, a highway of promise and a journey to frustration. The open road lies before each of the two young men whose journeys are the front and end pieces to *USA*. After the knowledge which comes of the reading of the book, the irony which surrounds the hopeful hitchhiker at the conclusion should be crushing. Yet as the "Camera Eye" would have it, "we have only words against" the "they" or "strangers" who are alien to the real America. And where there are words from true voices, there is life. □

Edward T. Wheeler *is dean of the faculty at the Williams School in New London, Connecticut.*

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Biographical/autobiographical writing is a favorite of mine. A few of the works under review here can be read in a single sitting, but others demand time and concentration. All but one are easily accessible to the nonexpert.

John LaFarge, who died in 1963, was one of the best known Jesuits of the American preconciliar church. A pioneer in interracial relations, deeply interested in the liturgical arts (as befitting the son of a well-known artist), active with Luigi Ligutti in the Catholic Rural Life Conference, LaFarge was a long-time editor at *America* and a contributor to the pages of this journal. His name has resurfaced most recently because of his involvement, during the waning days of Pius XI's papacy, in a never-published encyclical on the topic of racism which he co-wrote with two other Jesuits. That never-published encyclical shows another facet of the Vatican's attitude toward the Jews on the eve of World War II.

An Unordinary Man: A Life of Father John LaFarge, S.J.
by Robert A. Hecht
Scarecrow Press, $67.50, 304 pp.

Hecht came to this biography as a result of his research on LaFarge's nephew, Oliver LaFarge, who was a Pulitzer prize-winning novelist (1929) and keen student of Native Americans. Hecht's wide knowledge of the LaFarge family is put to good advantage in telling this story, which ranges from LaFarge's childhood through his education for the priesthood and subsequent entrance into the Jesuits, his long pastoral years with the rural population of Maryland (separate white and black parishes), to his work as a journalist and his wider involvement on the world stage.

Anyone who wishes to see starkly the preconciliar church as lived by one of its livelier minds would benefit from this biography. LaFarge knew the contemporary world but the limitations of his world view are also clear: his defense of Franco was unwavering; his loathing of birth control patent; his involvement with interracial matters a bit patronizing. That latter topic is so important that one might consult David Southern's *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism—1911-63* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996) for a more ample discussion than Hecht is able to provide.

This biography is a very "good read," although the author seems overly apologetic for the shortcomings of this generous and saintly priest. It is distressing, however, that the outrageous price of this book will give pause to interested readers and perhaps even make some libraries think twice before purchasing it.

Ita Ford: Missionary Martyr
by Phyllis Zagano
Paulist, $5.95, 50 pp.

Ita Ford was one of the four religious women who were raped and murdered by members of the Salvadoran military in 1980. Zagano's brief memoir of her life and death is an act of *pietas* toward one of the many martyrs in that unhappy country during a very perilous time.

There is almost nothing of the editorial nor anything approaching theological reflection in this work. Zagano gives us a simple and straightforward account of Ford's early education and upbringing, her entrance into the Maryknoll community and life as a missionary, first in Chile and then in El Salvador. She was only forty when she died.

This tribute has none of the "thickness" of, say, Jon Sobrino's published reflections on the Jesuit martyrs or his study of Archbishop Romero. I mention the spareness of Zagano's narrative not as a criticism. A book (actually, a booklet) like this serves its own purpose. It would be a fine gift to a person seeking a life of Christian discipleship or an example of how hagiography ought to be written. I also have a pedagogical idea of how to use it. When we have finished reading the early documents on Christian martyrs in my freshman seminar, I will circulate this book and others like it. My students need not think of martyrs as only facing hostile Roman judges, pleading parents, and lions in the circus as did Perpetua and Felicity in third-century North Africa. When we talk of martyrs we also need to talk about contemporary American women buried in shallow, peasant-dug graves who were murdered with military weaponry financed by our government. Later they were besmirched by our then secretary of state who had the gall to designate the women as "just not nuns." Zagano's succinct and vivid book truly expresses the meaning of martyrdom.

West, the celebrated Australian man of letters, subtitles his work "The Testimony of a Twentieth-Century Christian." He does not write a straight autobiography but lets us see the progress of his life from his days as an Irish Christian Brother through his military service in the Pacific during World War II to his later eminence as a playwright, novelist, and journalist. West is a cradle Catholic with just enough combative feistiness to have also made him a critical one. When Rome refused to annul his first marriage (even though his canonical intermediary said that he was a free man as far as the "internal forum" was concerned), West responded by raising his children as Catholics, not taking the sacraments, and waging a public literary war against what he saw as the cumbersome and insensitive procedures of canonical marriage courts. Though he is now fully reconciled to the church, Morris's indignation is still palpable—an indignation with which many Catholics will identify.

A View from the Ridge
by Morris West
HarperSan Francisco, $18, 157 pp.

In wonderfully written chapters, West describes his life as a fiction writer and years in the Far East and in Rome as a

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newspaper columnist. For Catholics of a certain age it is a treat to be reminded of his publications about Don Mario Borelli and the street urchins of Naples; his (prescient?) novel, *The Shoes of the Fisherman*, about the first Slavic pope; the success of *The Devil's Advocate*; and his fascination with Giordano Bruno (and the play *The Heretic* which derived from it).

There are also some moving paragraphs about faith and the life of faith. After a conversation in Rome with a wealthy Latin American who supported the death squads in his own country as a sheer necessity, West writes: "I learned the hardest lesson of my life. Evil is serene in its enormity. Evil...is not merely the absence of good; it is the absence of everything human, the black hole...in which even the face of God is eternally invisible." Passing observations like that, in the midst of a bracing good narrative of a full and successful career, make a worthy testimony to the life of an eighty-year-old writer who now stands looking at his past and our future "from the ridge."

Gaillot, a French prelate, was removed, on orders of Pope John Paul II, as bishop of the diocese of Evreux in 1995 because of his alleged lack of orthodoxy and public participation in movements thought inimical to the good of the church (*see, Commonweal*, October 6, 1995). His removal caused an uproar in France. When Gaillot lost his diocese he was made bishop of Partenia, an area in Algeria which disappeared as an actual diocese sometime after the Muslim conquest of North Africa. This polite fiction is the church's way of making or keeping bishops (who need an episcopal location) by naming them to a place which is, in the words of the law, *in partibus infidelium* ("in a pagan area").

Voices from the Desert
by Bishop Jacques Gaillot
Crossroad, $15.95, 116 pp.

Rome, unfortunately, did not reckon with the ingenuity of Gaillot. He created his diocese anew in cyberspace with a Partenia website (www.partenia.fr) and carries on his apostolate to the

A STARTLING NEW PICTURE OF THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

JAMES *the Brother of* JESUS

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marginalized through the force of his own personality and via his computer. There is a story—perhaps apocryphal—that when the pope remarked on Gaillot's skill at getting press attention, Gaillot replied humbly that he took the pope himself as his model.

This slim volume, written in his modest rooms in Paris, is an extended "pastoral letter" to the flock of the church of Partenia, which is a symbolic population of those who are on the fringes of society and the church. Gaillot's hope is to continue to preach the liberating news of the gospel while remaining "in communion with the church."

Readers will be struck, as I was, at the symmetry in Gaillot's life. As a young man he spent two years in the French military defending French rights in Algeria. Today, he works tirelessly to reach out to the Algerians in France who are the subject of much distrust and hatred as France grapples with vexatious conflicts over immigrants and the fear of the "Islamicization" of France.

Bernard of Clairvaux: Between Cult and History
by Adriaan H. Bredero
Eerdmans, $30, 320 pp.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) was one of the most influential figures in the medieval church. He was not only an impressive monastic founder, but his writings had their influence on the high medieval scholastics as well as the major reformers like Luther and Calvin. Most of his writings are now available in good English translations. We still await an authoritative contemporary biography, though the secondary literature on his writings comes out in a never-ending stream.

Bredero's dense and demanding study is not a biography but a prologomenon to one. A recently retired Dutch scholar, Bredero sets out to account for a problem. We have a picture of Bernard as a saintly mystic who has been the object of cult in the Catholic church for centuries as well as the wellspring for much mystical nourishment. But against that portrait, we have the "historical" Bernard who was engaged in ferocious attacks on the emerging university theology of the day, a relentless hunter of heretics (as Abelard found out to his sorrow), a bitter polemicist, and a preacher of crusades. As Bredero notes, the tension between the piety of Bernard's writings and the excesses of his public actions is patent.

This book is the "report of a long investigation" which has three prongs: (1) to read closely the first life of Bernard (the *Vita Prima*) in order to understand its apologetical character (especially the early part, which is the work of William of Saint Thierry); (2) to follow the history of historical interpretation from the saint's canonization down to the present renaissance of Bernardine scholarship; and (3) to come to some conclusions about Bernard as an "historiographical problem."

Bredero concludes that any complete biography of the saint will have to take into account Bernard as a monk and as a monastic founder (he is very good on Bernard's incredible gift for founding monasteries) in tandem with Bernard's attempt to "monasticize" the larger culture and, at the same time, to give "this state of life more depth in a mystical sense."

This is definitely a specialist's book and not a book for the casual reader. However, it is provocative and succeeds in contextualizing a figure who has often been called the "Last of the Fathers." Yet we still need an authoritative biography of the saint, who, in the words of the late Étienne Gilson, gave up everything for God except the art of writing well.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) was plucked from the relative obscurity of his academic career at Cambridge in 1529 as part of a team who defended Henry VIII's right to set aside his wife in order to marry Anne Boleyn. His defense of the king led him, in time, to the See of Canterbury and, as a consequence, to center stage in the move of Canterbury away from Rome. His highly complex career involved, among other things, the production of *The Book of Common Prayer* as well as his role as the architect of religious change in England. He was further implicated in the continuing marital travails of Henry. Arrested as a traitor at the time of the Marian restoration (1553), Cranmer first recanted his "Protestant" theological positions,

Thomas Cranmer
by Diarmuid MacCulloch
Yale University Press, $35, 692 pp.

but when he went to the stake in 1556 (after the execution of the other two Oxford martyrs, Ridley and Latimer) he reaffirmed his faith and repudiated his earlier recantations.

Many critics have judged Cranmer harshly for his hypocrisy in persecuting married clergy when he had a "secret" wife himself, for his willingness to send to the stake persons who had views similar to his own, and for his almost pecksniffian subservience to Henry. Nonetheless, Cranmer is best remembered for the liturgical service he provided the Church of England, including the establishment of Morning Prayer and Evensong for clergy and laity; a revised marriage rite; and the majestic prose of *The Book of Common Prayer* which, more than anything else, gave a center of unity to the Anglican communion.

The bare-bones description of Cranmer's importance provided above does little to indicate the depth of MacCulloch's comprehensive but eminently readable (and prize-winning) biography. The author has obviously mastered both the primary sources and the secondary literature. He is quite good at linking his subject to the continental reformers (Cranmer got Bucer to England; he was married to the daughter of the Lutheran divine, Osiander; he never wavered in his desire for a general council to heal religious rifts), and particularly helpful in tracing the long intellectual evolution of Cranmer's thinking, especially on the Eucharist. At base, in MacCulloch's words, was Cranmer's desire to guide the Church of England "through the thickets of wicked deceit which must be avoided at all costs: on the one hand, papistry; and, on the other, Anabaptism."

Although this is a very long book which has its share of *longueurs*, it is gracefully written and has its flashes of

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wit. I also rather enjoyed going to my *OED* to look up such arcane words as chough, becket, feoffment, eftsoons, advowsons, and mumpsimus. Those interested in church history in general and the history of theology and liturgy in particular will learn a good deal from MacCulloch. This is the kind of book to keep at one's desk to read a chapter at a time. That is exactly what I did: awarding myself a "good read" after finishing more pedestrian chores. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

States and Europe.

Ann Straulman repeats the frequently heard but simplistic assertion that the women's movement of the 1970s deserves the credit for the opportunities that women now enjoy. Those opportunities are attributable to many causes, not least of which was a profound economic and social transformation that lifted many Americans to unprecedented prosperity, while condemning others (especially divorced and unwed mothers) to an ever more difficult struggle for subsistence.

Not only did the feminists of the 1970s not "make it all possible," but they failed to go to bat for women who want to give priority, at least for a time, to child-rearing. Their indifference to the concerns of so many women, plus their cheerleading for divorce law reforms that were detrimental to women and children, explain why the leaders of organized feminism have not earned the sort of gratitude that is justly due to Martin Luther King, Jr., and his associates, nor the respect generally accorded to nineteenth-century suffragettes like Susan B. Anthony.

MARY ANN GLENDON

Too liberal

Some time ago I replied negatively to a *Commonweal* renewal notice, commenting that "You're too liberal for me." A glaring example of what I object to appears in your "Et Cetera" comment on an article by Bishop James McHugh about the 1996 election. You write: "He favorably cites Sidney Callahan's column in which she declared her vote for Dole to protest Clinton's veto of the partial-birth abortion bill. But there were equally conscientious Catholics who, examining Dole's record, felt they had no choice but to vote for Clinton, as the lesser of two evils."

What in the world could there possibly be in Dole's record which would be worse than Clinton's veto of the bill seeking to stop the infanticide now going on legally?

KATHERINE SCHULTZ
Cincinnati, Ohio

From the editors: It can be and has been argued: (1) that there is nothing in Senator Dole's record as ill-judged as President Clinton's decision to veto the partial-birth abortion bill; and (2) that Mr. Clinton's decision was so horrendous that it provided sufficient reason in itself to persuade a conscientious voter to vote against him by choosing Senator Dole instead. Both arguments have been made in these pages, and not only by Ms. Callahan.

Commonweal has also given space to another set of views. In brief: Yes, the veto was seriously wrong, even if based more on poor information than on sheer indifference to the evil of abortion. But if one takes into account the entire records and programs of the two candidates and their parties, a voter could decide in good conscience that Mr. Clinton and the Democrats were more likely to perceive the needs and defend the rights of needy Americans, avoid dangerously nationalistic policies in foreign affairs, improve the quality of schools, reduce the deficit without punishing the most vulnerable, and even—as a side effect of social and tax policies—help reduce the incidence of abortion: A pregnant girl or woman who hates the thought of abortion but is also desperately poor, jobless, and alone, may decide she has no other option.

Editorially, *Commonweal*, though it has criticized the veto in the strongest terms, has neither condemned nor endorsed either of these overall approaches to the 1996 election. Ms. Schultz has every right to decide that by giving the time of day to the second approach we have demonstrated that we are too liberal for her. We are not here contending that her own conclusion is wrong, but that her argument for it is too simple.

Too costly

I had already received two notices asking me to renew my *Commonweal* subscription for a year at $44 when, to my surprise, I received a request to subscribe for the same period for $21. It seems your subscription and promotion departments aren't operating on the same wavelength; the left hand does not know what the right hand is up to.

Anyway, I took advantage of the $21 dollar offer. I think the $44 rate is outrageous; you should review it or suffer the loss of many subscribers, including me. I enjoy the magazine (as well as *America*), but I'm being priced out of the market by both publications.

Has it occurred to you to look to the magazine racks of parish churches as a way of increasing circulation and easing your monetary problems? There are some Catholics out there in the trenches who can appreciate *Commonweal*. That suggestion is free; maybe I'll pass it on to *America*.

EDWIN S. ZMUDZINSKI
Fairfax, Va.

From the editors: (1) Our subscription and promotion departments, being pretty much the same person, occupy a single solitary wavelength. (2) Like most other publications large and small, we offer introductory subscriptions to new subscribers at a sharp discount in the hope that once they know the magazine they will renew at a price that will cover our costs. (3) Yes, the cost of a *Commonweal* subscription is high, a lot higher than we'd like, but it's not high enough to keep us in business without the help

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of gifts from the Commonweal Associates, and if it were lower we'd be in trouble even with those gifts. That's because big advertisers (the chief source of revenue for the mass media) don't love little magazines. (4) Some parishes do stock *Commonweal* on their magazine racks, and we work in season and out of season to increase their number. Readers can help; once in a while (say, every third Sunday), ask your pastor or parish council to find out from us how our bulk sales plan works. (5) Thanks for asking.

Too wordy

I am a new subscriber, enticed by a chance encounter with a delightful book, *The Commonweal Reader*, edited by Edward S. Skillin [1949]. I should note that I consider myself mid-range in comprehension: a college graduate, read or reread Merton, Chesterton, Belloc, Newman, Andrew Greeley, *America*, the *Register*, etc.

I've just finished reading your issue of March 14, cover to cover. Very much enjoyed the column by Abigail McCarthy, the fine interview with Mary Robinson, the article by Brian Lennon, and others.

But the book reviews! The choice of books is fine, but for whom are the reviewers writing? Were they trying to impress their colleagues in the intelligentsia? To see who could write the longest sentences and come up with the most obscure words? I was lost before I got their point. *Elitistweal*!

BOB BRAY
Carmel, Calif.

From the editors: Mr. Bray may be onto something. On the other hand: Though *Commonweal* is intended for the general reader, we also cover developments in areas such as theology and political philosophy that can make demands on writers and therefore on readers. The Religion Book issue Mr. Bray picked up is a case in point; many readers look to us for a fairly sophisticated treatment of works by the likes of von Balthasar, Blondel, Paul Wilkes, etc., and in that issue we try to oblige them. That is no excuse for mere prolixity or obscurity, and we try hard to avoid such occasions of sin.

Children in church

Elizabeth Cahill's "Green Eggs & Ham & God" [February 14] reminds me of my sister's response when I was indignant that no children had been invited to a wedding Mass I attended. She pointed out that one unruly child can completely disrupt the service. Later, at another wedding, I was seriously distracted by the antics of a toddler in front of me. That helped me see how parents can make others uncomfortable by failing to take responsibility for their children's behavior.

I suppose this situation has existed whenever people gathered to worship; one wonders how Saint Paul and the other Apostles coped with it. Who is responsible? Not Ms. Cahill's middle-aged couple or the woman with the "bony, unsmiling knees." Not the celebrant; how could he be? An usher might be instructed to escort an offending child and its parents to a nursery, but I question whether he or she would accept this particular chore.

Many couples choose to hire a sitter, or leave the children with a relative, or attend separate Masses and leave the little ones at home. But there's a risk in coming childless to Mass; one might be distracted by a thoughtless couple whose tot keeps plummeting into the pew ahead.

ROSE SULLIVAN
Morgantown, W. Va.

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TAXATION WITHOUT SALVATION

Peter Feuerherd

Call him Restless in Seattle. He phoned the "Rush Limbaugh Show" not long ago. Seems like the middle-aged guy from Washington State has been pulling in a regular six-figure salary over much of the past decade. He's saved enough to now be in a kind of semi-retirement, practicing a musical instrument daily without the need to go to work. Life in the pristine Northwest must be wonderful, this listener thinks.

But Restless is ticked off. He's scowling about school taxes, about taxes to pay for Seattle's mass transit so that less well-heeled office workers can get to their daily jobs downtown, and is complaining that he's been forced out of the economy because he can't keep enough of what he's earned. He's mad as hell and won't take it anymore.

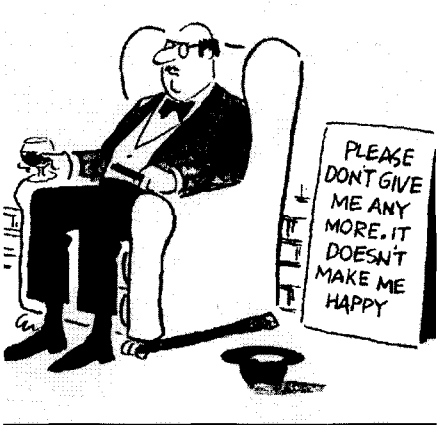
His complaints echo through my car as I'm driving through the heart of East New York, Brooklyn, one of the bleakest portions of that often-blighted borough. The juxtaposition of the man's complaint, who describes his spacious acreage in the forest, with the mean streets I see around me is jarring.

Restless in Seattle reminds me of Binx Bolling, the title character in Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*. Binx is an affluent stockbroker in postwar suburban New Orleans, who has everything he needs materially but still feels a regular uneasiness. Binx knows there's something wrong existentially, but can't figure out what. Restless in Seattle has the tax man to blame for his woes, come April 15, short-circuiting his existential search.

More than seven years after the destruction of the Berlin Wall, we are still—U.S. liberals and conservatives alike—practical Marxists. For every social problem, there is a material answer. Restless in Seattle tells us that taxes are his problem, but one senses that he has enough money, whether that supply is taxed at 30, 40, or 50 percent. Rush, of course, tells him that he has a right to whine. But I wonder if the whining does any good. The fact is, most of us, who aren't living in the rough areas of places like East New York, are dealing with the problems wrought by affluence.

I've never made much money in my career. But I find, as my wife and I hold relatively decent professional jobs, that at age forty there is a little more left over after every paycheck, even with the demands of two teen-agers. A friend at my age, who has made and put away a lot more than I have, is ready to drop out of the whirl of the ad biz that consumed him in his twenties and thirties and rely on his wife's earnings and their stock portfolio. In some ways, I, my friend, and Restless in Seattle, are all baby-boomers enjoying the kind of opulence unheard of for most of the world's population. We are, measured in historical terms, a very privileged crew. But few of us will say it out loud.

Walking around New York this past December provided a stark reminder that there is a *lot* of wealth out there. It was nearly impossible to make it to the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center because of the hordes of shoppers who clogged the sidewalks in Midtown. Over at Madison Square Garden, where my wife had gotten me tickets to a Knicks game as a present (we sat in the $30-seats, far above the Woody Allen and Spike Lee section), I stood in amazement on a trip to the snack bar at seeing regular working folks slapping down $4 for a box of Cracker Jacks. There was no shortage of business.



Nor is there a shortage of concern about tax rates, inflation, and retirement benefits. A recent commission of economists said that inflation may well have been overestimated for decades. Panic immediately swept in among those whose Social Security or government salaries might not rise as much in the future as they had been led to anticipate. Then Richard Nixon's top economic adviser claimed that the taxes the average person pays today are not appreciably different than what the rates were in the 1950s. I tell people both nuggets of information and they stare incredulously. No way it's true, they tell me.

Both suppositions are difficult to accept. But both, if they are correct, strike at the heart of every bit of political posturing we've heard for the past few decades: instead of being in an inexorable economic decline, we may well be doing better than ever. Restless in Seattle may not only be far wealthier than his father and grandfather ever were, but he's probably paying less proportionately in taxes. So why is he so miserable? Why are we so unhappy?

Limbaugh doesn't have a clue, but Binx Bolling may provide an answer: Where your treasure is, there is your heart. □

Peter Feuerherd *is assistant editor of the* Long Island Catholic *and national affairs writer for the* National Catholic Register.

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